

WARREN NELSON: GAMING FROM THE OLD DAYS TO COMPUTERS

Interviewee: Warren Nelson

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Description

Warren Nelson was born in Great Falls, Montana, in 1913. He went to high school and one year of college in Helena, Montana. He started his gambling career, a career that has lasted over forty-five years, in Montana. Nelson came to Reno at the request of a friend in 1936, and he started a keno game at the Palace Club that year. It was the first to be operated by a white man in Reno. He was at the Palace Club until 1942 when he enlisted in the Marine Corps. Later, he was part owner of the Waldorf Club for a time, worked at the Mapes for five years, and went back to the Palace Club for another eight years.

In the early 1960s he and some other businessmen bought the Cal-Neva Club in Reno. They also opened the Comstock Casino in May of 1978. Warren Nelson also has minor interests in casinos in Las Vegas. He was one of the first presidents of the Gaming Industry Association. In his more than forty years in Nevada gaming, he has known many famous and infamous people in the gambling business and other walks of life. Warren Nelson is still in touch with his gaming origins in Reno, and because of his success, he can afford to give of himself to others today.

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An Oral History Conducted by Keith Becker

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber
Director, UNOHP
July 2012

INTRODUCTION

Warren Nelson was born in Great Falls, Montana in 1913. He went to high school and one year of college in Helena, Montana. It was in Montana that he started his gambling career as a very young man, a career that has lasted over forty-five years. He came to Reno at the request of a friend in 1936. He started a Keno game at the Palace Club that year; it was the first to be operated by a white man in Reno. He was at the Palace Club until 1942 when he enlisted in the Marine Corps. Later he was part owner of the Waldorf Club for a time, worked at the Mapes for five years, and went back to the Palace Club for another eight years. In the early 1960s he, along with some other men, bought the Club Cal-Neva in Reno. These same men opened a new casino in May, 1978 called the Comstock. He also has minor interests in casinos in Las Vegas. He was also one of the first presidents of the Gaming Industry Association. Over the more than forty years that he has been a part of gambling in Nevada and Reno in particular, he has known many varied individuals,

famous and infamous, in the gambling business and other walks of life.

Mr. Nelson was very enthusiastic about doing this oral history. He was very open about all facets and periods of his life, and what is contained in this volume is the original transcript with only minor changes. The taping sessions took place in his office in the Club Cal-Neva in Reno from November, 1977 to March, 1978. His office reflects the nature of the man. It is small and unpretentious and contains what is important to him. There are used Keno tickets that fill up half the room. There are awards and certificates from civic and charitable organizations on the walls. He is still in touch with his gambling origins in Keno, and because of his success he can afford to give part of his time and of himself to others today. He truly is a man who has been in gambling from the old days to the age of computers.

The Oral History Project of the University of Nevada, Reno, Library preserves the past and the present for future research by tape

recording the recollections of people who have been important to the development of Nevada and the West. Transcripts resulting from the interviews are deposited in the Special Collections departments of the University Libraries at Reno and Las Vegas. Warren Nelson has generously donated the literary rights in his memoir to the University of Nevada, and has designated the volume as open for research.

Keith Becker
University of Nevada, Reno
1978

BACKGROUND, EDUCATION

I was born in Great Falls, Montana, January 19, 1913. My father's name was Lawrence Nelson; he was a chef of Danish extraction. He had been raised in Oregon. My grandfather came over from Denmark and joined the Northern army in the Civil War. At that time the name was Nelsen, s-e-n, but my grandfather's poor English and the lack of understanding of the sergeant that enlisted him put it down s-o-n, so since then it's been N-e-l-s-o-n.

My mother's name was Bertha Meisenbach. Her parents were born in Luxemberger. She came out to Montana from St. Louis as a young girl and married my father. I had a lot of relatives around Montana, on my mother's side all German and Luxemberger extraction. I spent quite a bit of time with them up to the time I was five years old. At that time my mother became ill and died delivering a child; the child died too. Since then I have had no brothers or sisters.

After my mother's death, my father was a cook, a chef, in a restaurant there and couldn't take care of me. I have people who I

call aunt and uncle but who were actually my second cousins that took me down to a little town called Hysham, in southern Montana. Hysham was the county seat of the smallest county in Montana called Treasure County. It would be hard to believe that this was a real wild county in those days, there were cowboys who came to town on Saturday night with their pistols on their hip, and there was a shooting most every week.

We lived on a one hundred-sixty acre ranch outside of the town, about forty miles out. The roads were very, very poor and we couldn't drive the car across the creeks so we lived on the other side of the creek. We lived in a log cabin with no floor, a dirt floor, two rooms and a little lean-to on the outside where the kids slept. I had six cousins, four girls and two boys; I was the youngest. Being the youngest I was pretty well spoiled by the older ones. But, it was a good life for about four years.

I went to school in Hysham up until the third grade, I believe, then went to the little town of Eden, Montana, with my relatives and

went to school in a little county school. Six people in the school, five girls and one boy. Needless to say, I was the only boy. Being the youngest of the six children I probably took quite a bit advantage of the girls and of the teacher by bringing mice to school and trying to scare the girls all the time. This came back on me a couple of years later when my father remarried.

My father married a young girl that was nineteen years old, just eleven years older than I. She was a very useful person and I moved to town to live with them. She had a great deal to do with my life. She had had a tough life herself. She was born in Oklahoma; her maiden name was Loutherback. She had a child by a former marriage. My step-sister is still alive; I don't see her very often. She was very strict with me, but still very fair. She was a great help to me. I was nine years old when I moved in with them, but I still went every summer and stayed with the people at the ranch. I had great experiences as a young person on the ranch— helping put the hay and getting the cows. I became very fond of that kind of life.

I finished grade school in 1926 I believe. I think that was the year that Charles Russell died. I remember that very vividly because he was a great friend of my father's. One of the great things of my life is that I always tell everybody that I knew personally Charlie Russell. Charlie was a great man. He brought the first fresh pineapple I had ever seen from Hawaii and gave it to me. Brought it back on a ship because in those days there were no planes going back and forth. It was quite a treat and something very different. I can remember very vividly my father and Charlie Russell sitting in front of a still in the basement of our home making whiskey. I suppose it was pretty good bourbon, without the flavoring, because they used to sit there

and drink this hot whiskey as it came out of the still and tell stories about the old days. Charlie Russell would bring a couple of illegal beaver hides all hooped up on a willow and be fletching the meat off them while they were drinking. It was a great experience that I'll never forget.

I suppose I was about twelve years old when I started in junior high, not a very good student, but got by all the time, full of mischief. One of the toughest things in my life was to go from a little country school and start in working with boys who I had never played with or been around. So you can imagine that I had a lot of trouble. I'd get punched in the nose every time I'd turn around; I had many a black eye and many a broken nose before I found out you can't tease boys like you do girls.

Going through junior high and into high school I suppose I grew up very fast. As a freshman in high school I got to be, I suppose, a little wild. Drinking dandelion wine and chokecherry wine if we could steal it or buy it. I became quite a problem for my parents. My father became very unhappy with me. I had an argument with him when I was a sophomore in high school about drinking and not going to school; I was going to get a job and go out on my own. I got a job at three dollars a day as an electrician's helper; I worked for two days and my step-mother came and got me. She prevailed upon me to go to school over in Helena, Montana.

The school that I attended was Carroll College; at that time it was called Mount St. Charles. Mount St. Charles was a high school and a college both. I think there were eighty-nine people in the college and about forty high school students. We had a football team, and I had a chance to do things that I'd never done before. I started to learn to like athletics and got real hung up trying to be a

good basketball player. Although I was tall, I was very light. I weighed about one hundred thirty-five pounds and I was very awkward. I had never had any kind of experience at all in any kind of athletics. As a sophomore in high school I tried to play basketball, but I'd fall down about every time I'd try to run down the floor. I met a man by the name of Sid Smith who was a senior in college but who was also coaching the high school team.

He said, "Kid you're going to break your neck." He then threw me a basketball and said, "I don't want you to do anything but dribble this ball." He would keep me three hours a night just dribbling that basketball around the floor. Dribbling that basketball gave me a sense of balance. I'm certain it had a great effect on me because I did it for at least three weeks or a month. It really changed my life. I learned how to turn and move. I never became a good athlete, but an adequate one. It was something I liked and there was nothing else to do at a Catholic college anyway; we never got out at night. It was a twenty-four hour thing; we either went to church or to school or played basketball and football. We also had a handball court, and I became pretty proficient at that.

I had the usual experiences you would have in high school. In my senior year I played basketball; we had a pretty good team and did very well. It was a lot of fun, and I made a lot of friends. We did some traveling to the smaller towns and finally wound up coming in third in the zone basketball tournament in Butte, Montana.

The next year I came back to Carroll College in 1930. It was sort of the start of the Depression; it really hadn't hit yet, but I guess people could see it coming on. On the day of registration there was a new man who had come out from Notre Dame University to coach the football team. He looked at me and

said, "Hello son, how are you? You're Warren Nelson aren't you?"

I said, "Yes Sir."

He said, "How would you like to play football for me?" I told him I didn't think I was big enough. He said, "If you've got guts enough you're big enough. I think you're big enough; why don't you come on out? I'd like to make an end out of you."

His name was Bill Jones. He had been one of the linemen for the "Four Horsemen;" he was one of the "Seven Mules." He was just a fantastic guy; he gave me confidence that I had never had before. He's still my friend. At this time he is the chief judge of the courts in Washington, D.C. He's the counterpart of Judge Sirica; he's now the head judge in the District of Columbia. I still see him all the time; he still talks about football and talks it very well.

We had a reunion in 1971 of that football team. It was forty years since the team had been unbeaten, untied and unscored upon. I was a third-string end and saw very little action, but everybody treated me just like I had been the star so it was a great experience. My wife and I went; I think there were twenty-nine out of the thirty-nine members of that team at the reunion. The coach was there and all the priests who had a lot to do with me as I grew up.

A priest by the name of Father McCormack and the principal of the school, Father Riley, were very good to me. They taught me a lot. In the middle of my freshman year in college I decided to become a Catholic, not at their urging, but at their suggestion.

Sid Smith, the coach of the high school basketball team, was my sponsor into the Catholic religion. He was a big, tough, strong, mean guy as far as athletics was concerned, but a very gentle man underneath. He had a great influence on my life. I became very fond

of him, and he certainly never gave me any of the best of it; he would make me do things that he wouldn't make other people do. I can recall playing football and being an end trying to block halfbacks; when I tried to block a two hundred pound halfback I broke a thumb. It pained me terribly and naturally when I tried to block anybody I couldn't hold them off with that broken thumb, so they were pushing me all over the field. The backfield coach for the team called to Sid Smith and told him to get me out of there and send him a tough end. Sid came over and asked me what was wrong. I said I didn't know. He asked if I was hitting those guys and I said I was trying.

He then said, "See if you can hit me." He got down in position and tried to block me. We got into a hassle, just hitting each other around the football field. He was hitting me, and I was hitting him, but fortunately me being young and he was a coach and not in the same condition I was in, it wasn't about ten minutes he was panting and I'd sort of had the best of him. He told me to go get a shower; I did and went back to my room.

I was soaking my thumb because it was all swollen up when he came in and asked what happened. I said I'd broken my thumb, and he asked when I had broken it. I said on the first play that day.

He asked, "Why didn't you tell me?"

I said, "You didn't ask me." We became very fast friends and later on he became a very religious person and still is in Montana and still my very dear friend.

I went to school that year and part of the next year. The freshman came in, and they dropped the football team. had an appointment to West Point. I was very bent on going to West Point, but my background in mathematics was very, very bad, so it just didn't look like I could make it. I had the appointment to West Point, wanted to go

and was going to go, and I was taking the courses to do it. I went to a class taught by a priest who is now the bishop of the Spokane (Washington) Diocese, by the name of Bishop Topel. He asked me if I had taken advanced algebra in high school, and I said no; he then asked me what I was doing in this class, which was algebra.

I replied, "Damned if I know." That just about ended my aspirations to go to West Point because I just didn't have the mathematical or educational background.

EARLY CAREER IN GAMING IN MONTANA

When I left school, probably in November, I went back to a job I had had every summer for four summers, as a bellhop. I started that bellhop job when I was about fourteen and worked every summer. It was a very good job; I made a lot of money. It was in a hotel that my father had been the chef of; the operator was a good friend of my father's and was very good to me. I learned an awful lot because in those days, the late 1920s and 1930, bootlegging was rampant. The hotels had a lot going on in them, not crime, but a lot of drinking and so on and so forth. I was at that time bootlegging—selling whiskey; everybody did it, it seemed the thing to do. I made a lot of money and spent it to go to school every year, so I guess it wasn't all wasted.

I learned a lot on that job. In January or February of that year (1930), a job that had been good for a hundred dollars a day went down when the Depression really hit. You couldn't make a nickel a day, and my wages were fourteen dollars a month from the hotel; there were no tips, the rooms were empty, it was like a morgue.

A friend of my father's got a man to come over from Butte and open a Keno game. A Keno game at that time was called "Chinese Lottery." It was a game that was well-received in Butte, Montana; and they had four or five games there. These games were the first to operate in Montana, naturally they weren't legal. They would open and close at the whim of the officials that were running the state— county attorney, the judges, the sheriff. Like any other thing it was pretty much of a mess.

When I heard that they were going to open the Keno game I went to my dad's partner—my dad was kind of the guy that got it open, the partner was the guy that owned the place—his name was Cal Lewis. I went and asked him for a job; he said, "Well sure."

He put me to work for five dollars a day. The first night I worked my father came in and asked what I was doing there. I told him I worked there, and he told me to get out, he didn't want me in there. His partner came over and told him, "Leave the kid alone. I told him to go to work and he's going to work." I

was eighteen and a half or nineteen then, so I stayed there.

It was a very interesting game; it had a lot of mathematics. The mathematics that I didn't have in college or high school, I started getting interested in.

I took a trip over to Helena to talk to a priest there by the name of Father Rooney. He was the assistant president and had the reputation of being one of the world's best mathematicians. In fact, they rated him fifth behind Einstein at that time in the United States or in the world I suppose. He was a very bright man. I told him about the game and how it was and what it was. He looked at it and said he understood it and that I could "do this if you do this" and showed me the formulas of what to do. I said, "Well OK Father, would you do that for me?" He told me to do it for myself.

"This is how you do it, so do it."

This was before calculators and even before adding machines that amounted to anything. So, I took a roll of butcher paper and put it on the floor and started working out those formulas. Some nights I would go from one end of the room to the other on my belly moving backwards, figuring out those formulas. It was a great experience, and I think it had a lot to do with me in the gambling business since because I think I got a great understanding of numbers from it which is very important.

We would open and close, back and forth, open for six months and close again. One time we closed and were out of work for five or six months, not having any money at the end. Whenever we would close, four or five of us young guys would go off hunting or fishing until we got open again. We had great times; we drank some—not too much—gambled some—not too much—but mostly did a lot of hunting and fishing and chased a few girls,

the different things you do between the ages of nineteen and twenty-one.

I guess I was the leader of these people. I loved to gamble. I would bet on anything at anytime, and I was very, very lucky. I had a good mind for gambling besides being lucky and wasn't afraid to bet my money. I had a great reputation for being a good card player. I don't think I really was but I had the guts to do it and would do it. My father did everything in the world to cure me of this, including bringing in people to try to cheat me, but, I was so lucky that I would even beat the people that were supposed to cheat. I guess I was supposed to learn the business that way instead of the hard way. I never did get to the point where I was a bad loser, and I never was afraid to gamble and not afraid to bet.

This went on for four years, off and on; at one time I stopped because we got closed up. I became a pipe-fitter's helper. I worked at that for eleven months. It was the toughest job that I ever saw. If I remember right, I was making four dollars a day. We were hanging four inch pipe on stringers about forty feet in the air. I was working with a little Swede who was about five foot tall. We were carrying forty foot, four inch pipes up a forty foot ladder. It was hard work; when I came in every night I was dead tired. I decided then that I wasn't going to become a plumber.

We opened up again and I went back into the gambling business for several months and then closed again.

At that time I went to work in the county assessor's office. I worked there about four months and became deputy county assessor, a political job. I became interested in politics at that time; I was a registered Democrat, and I was now twenty-one years old and decided I was going to be a politician. I went down to register to run for county assessor at the age of twenty-one. A lot of people told me I had

a good chance and they thought it was a good idea. I was real happy with it and thought it was something of a “big-shot” thing to get elected. I put up the thirty dollars to register. My dad asked if I was sure this was what I wanted to do. I said I thought so. He said he could get me a job at the fire department, but I didn’t want to be a fireman and sit around twenty-four hours a day and wait for something to happen. He said I should think about security, and I said that was right.

Within a few days, one of the people who was supposed to be a big wheel in the political format of Cascade County and Great Falls called me to his office.

He said, “Warren, I’m glad to hear you’re running for county assessor. We need young fellows like you; I think it’s a good idea, and I’d like to see you go ahead with it.”

This was a big thing for me, and I said, “Thank you Sir, that’s great.”

He said that there was one problem, there was a fellow there they had to get rid of, and he told me what he wanted me to do. I thought it was kind of a dirty trick.

I said, “Look, this man’s a friend of mine. I’ve known him, and I couldn’t do that to him.”

He asked if I wanted to be county assessor. I said yes; he said if I didn’t do that I wouldn’t be. I started to say something, but he said, “That’s all!” So I left.

About two days later I got a call from Reno wanting to know if I wanted to come down and open up a Keno game for a man called Francis Lyden. With no hesitation I said yes and when did they want me to be there. He said tomorrow and asked if I could bring a crew. I said I could and how many men did he want. He said four. I told him we would be there as soon as we could get a bus.

I went to see my dad and told him about what I was going to do. He asked if I was sure this was what I wanted to do, and I told him

I was absolutely positive. I didn’t want to be county assessor or have anything to do with the political end of it.

He said, “Well kid maybe you’re right. I’d rather have you be an honest gambler than a crooked politician anyway.” This is not to say that all the politicians I’ve known have been crooked, they certainly haven’t; but I do think it was a great thing for him to say. The only other thing he said was, “Don’t fool around with the wrong kind of women when you go to Reno. Don’t get carried away blowing your money gambling, just use good judgement.” I think I’ve followed that pretty well to this day.

PALACE CLUB, 1936-1942

I got together a crew to bring to Reno. These people are all dead now. One young man by the name of Jim Brady was a very bright guy about my age or a little bit younger. I was twenty-three at the time—1936. A young fellow by the name of Clyde Bittner, who worked for me at the time of his death—he was a shift manager—just a real fine, fine man and very knowledgeable in the business. Another man named Dick Trinastich came with me. He was a big, fat fellow who died of a heart attack; he got teased a lot, but he was a very good Keno man.

We arrived in Reno on the twenty-ninth of April, 1936. Francis Lyden got us a room in a hotel above the Palace Club. Then we started getting all the things together to open up the game.

Francis had dealt the game up in Butte, Montana with his brother Joe. Joe was an electrical engineer. Their stepfather, whose name was Pete Notten, was one of the old-timers in the gambling business and had brought his two step-sons into the business. They were very bright, methodical people, and

knew the business well. I learned a lot from both of them. Joe is now in his eighties and lives in Las Vegas, and I believe he operates the Keno game in the Holiday Hotel.

On the way through Butte to Reno we stopped and talked to Joe Lyden and old man Notten; they gave me more advice.

Getting into Reno, we started to get the stuff together. Reno was a very bright place at the time; there were things that I'd never seen before; it was very, very interesting.

I met a young lady the first night I was in town—the twenty-ninth of April and married her on the twentieth of May; her name was Clorinda Petricciani, the daughter of the man who owned the Palace Club who Francis Lyden worked for. This was sort of done on the spur of the moment, but we stayed married for ten years. It naturally made a difference because I got chances through old John Petricciani, who was called “Slot Machine Johnny,” that I wouldn't have gotten if I hadn't been married to his daughter. However, I think that I learned well and did the best I could with that.

A short time later I had a falling out with Francis Lyden. At that time I was going to leave, but a man named Vinnie Merialdo prevailed upon me to go to work in the pit. He put me on the Chuck-a-luck game and started to teach me how to deal "21." He was a very good teacher. I really wanted to find out everything I could about the business; it fascinated me. I'd ask questions of everybody I talked to. I would walk around town to see who I thought was the best dealer, how they did it, talk to anybody who would talk to me about gambling and how was the best way to handle it.

During that time I lived a pretty good life; we partied some—not too much—but most of my time was a fascination for gambling. I would spend many extra hours—at that time I was working all the time, ten, twelve, fourteen hours, which wasn't unusual in those days.

This went on for two years, until 1938 when Johnny Petricciani sent me up to Lake Tahoe to open a Keno game in the old Nevada Club. They never had Keno up there before; it was very new to them and it wasn't very successful. We would run one shift a day. I spent a lot of time fishing and fooling around. I did learn a lot about Lake Tahoe. Almost everything up there at that time was a flat joint, places that cheated the customer. It was nothing like it is today; the gaming was very sporadic. There was a place called the Country Club Casino; it had great food and all, but it was not a very good start for gambling there. I was perhaps one of the first to believe that Lake Tahoe would one day be what it is today.

We closed up for the winter of 1938. When I came back to Reno the old man told me to come in and deal "21" the next day. The next day I came down to go to work—I wasn't getting along too well with the girl I was married to—I asked him who I was going to work for; he said he had just fired so-and-so,

and I asked why. He said that the man's hand was all curled up, and he couldn't deal too good anymore. The man was a good friend of mine, and I got mad and said, "If you don't want him to work you can't have me either." So I went out and got a train back to Butte, Montana.

I had ten dollars when I got to Butte. I went to a place called "The Arcade" and asked a man named "Curly" Darrow for a job. He asked where I was from, and I said Reno. He said, "Reno, huh," turned around and walked away. I'd already put my ten dollar bill on the bar and spent two of it trying to become acquainted.

I went down the street to another place after a job dealing "21." Joe Lyden, whose brother I had went to Reno for earlier, owned the place. Pete Notten had died and Joe was running the place. Joe was sort of deformed with a hunchback. He was a very bright guy, and everything he did he did right as far as dealing was concerned. He said he would put me to work dealing the wheel. I said I'd rather deal "21." He didn't have a job dealing "21" and said I should go to work dealing the wheel; I agreed.

There was kind of a catch to it because I had never dealt the wheel, didn't know the first thing about it except in my curiosity I'd stood across from the wheel and learned to roll the ball. I had a good friend in Reno who used to shove the checks across the table, and I would shove them back; so I had a basic knowledge; however, I had never stood behind the game and dealt it. It took some guts to do it, but with most of my ten dollars gone I had to put my backbone up someplace.

I went to work and fortunately it was in the wintertime so there wasn't too much business. I got by pretty well. The first night I went to work, there was a young man about my age who was to be my helper. I asked his

name which was Pete Seaman. I asked how long he had been working there and what did he do.

He replied, "Today I'm check-racking, but yesterday I was a dealer, but they got this good dealer from Reno and they demoted me to check-racker."

I said, "Partner, I've got some news for you; I'm not a good dealer, I've never dealt this game in my life."

He couldn't believe that because he said I rolled the ball good, and I said that was all I could do, not anything else. I asked if he would help me, and he said yes. He was trying to learn, and I was trying to learn so we spent all the time dealing to each other, and we did learn fast. It wasn't real easy but the night shift manager didn't know any more than we did. If Joe Lyden had been working the night shift he would have caught on in a minute that we didn't know what we were doing. We innovated; if we got seventeen checks straight-up for thirty-five times seventeen, we would go into a huddle to find out what thirty-five times seventeen was.

I'd say, "Well ten is three fifty."

He'd say, "Seven is two hundred and forty-five, so that's five hundred ninety-five." So we would pay the player five hundred and ninety-five. We got by that way, and both of us became good wheel dealers and very good friends.

To show what kind of a friend Pete Seaman was, at the time I left Reno my wife had gotten a divorce right after I left and remarried and left her new husband. She called me and wanted me to come back to Reno. We called back and forth, and I was left with a big phone bill that I couldn't pay. I went to Pete Seaman and told him I had a diamond ring I'd like to hock and needed two hundred dollars. I asked him where I could go. He said I didn't have to hock the ring, that he

would loan me the two hundred dollars. We went up to his little room in a little hotel there, and he took a trunk out from underneath his bed—a locker—and picked up the top drawer and reached down to the bottom and brought out a sock full of five dollar bills. He was getting five dollars a day, and every other day he would put five dollars away. He loaned me the two hundred dollars. He's still my friend and still in the gambling business. He is one of the many kinds of people I've dealt with in my life that makes me think that my business is a good business.

I worked there for the rest of that winter. My ex-wife came to Butte. In the spring, Joe Lyden called me over and told me it was real tough then and would have to cut me down to two days a week. I said I couldn't get along on two days a week. He said it was all he could do, so I had to quit then and try to find another job. I had no idea where to find a job in Montana because it was pretty tough; even in '39 the Depression was still on.

When I got home that afternoon I got a call from John Petricciani saying he really needed me in Reno and would I come back and become a pit boss. This was an opportunity I'd thought about for a long time. I was very happy to do it and went back to Reno as a pit boss in the Palace Club.

It was a tough job. I had two brothers-in-law to work with and we did a pretty good job of running the place, I guess, because it made some money. In the wintertime it would fall down and get real tough, but in the summertime we'd work like the devil and get the bankroll back. It was going pretty well.

There was a man named Bill Panelli who was one of the pit bosses there; well thought of, well respected guy. He probably had as much to do with my knowledge of the gaming business as anybody. Bill had an insatiable curiosity about the best way to do things. He

would sit down and look at the layout of a wheel, how the checks were placed, and try to figure for hours what would be the best way to clean that layout—to do it right with the least amount of effort, the least amount of time and the smoothest looking way.

He had a real bad habit of every time there was a real good game, Crap game for instance, when we were working together and getting off shift, he would say, “Let’s go deal.” So we would go deal Craps for two or three hours because the play was good and it was good experience and practice. He would ask why don’t you do this that way and this that way. I think many of the innovations and the procedures in gambling came from that time—from Bill Panelli and myself trying to figure out the best way to put the hole card under, what’s the best way to look at your hole card on “21.” what’s the best way for most anything.

Faro Bank was the big game at the time, and Bill spent a lot of time teaching me Faro Bank. I became a pretty good dealer; it’s the toughest game in the gambling business to deal; it takes a lot of concentration. In fact, it always takes two dealers, one to watch the other. All the old-timers in the Faro Bank games thought they were the elite in the gambling business. They would hardly speak to a wheel dealer or a “21” dealer; they were the top people.

There was an old man by the name of Warren Atcheson who was the dean of the gamblers at that time. Warren wore a stiff collar and a little string tie. A very austere looking man, a severe looking man with steel-rimmed glasses, thin. He was like a judge for the gambling business. If anybody had an argument come up over something, they would go see Warren Atcheson. Warren would say “this is the way it is” and that would be the end of the story. He was the man that

made all the decisions of what was right and what was wrong. Now the Gaming Control Board takes that position, but then he was the judge and jury of the gambling business. He was only a dealer then.

Starting with these people at the age of twenty-three I don’t think I ever acted like I was twenty-three at the time. I had a good way of saying, “Yes, Sir,” and “No, Sir,” and asking questions.

When I asked a question I’d say, “Mr. Atcheson, I saw that you did that this way and I think that’s a very good way to do it, but would you please tell me why you do it that way?” I think it was partly flattery, so all these old fellows kind of took me into their confidence and would help me all they could. They taught me a lot of things, a myriad of things. I had a different question for everybody everyday that I talked to. Had I retained it all, there’s no telling the knowledge that I lost, but I think the things I did retain have helped me immeasurably through the years.

These people, there were a lot of them, were very fantastic people. They were from many walks of life. There was an engineer by the name of Larry Hazelwood who had a college degree in engineering and drifted into the gambling business. He was a very fair man; principle was the main thing in his life. He became a very good friend. He was dealing Faro Bank with another gentleman, and I was on the floor. Being a pit boss and manager and running all these old-timers took a lot of diplomacy, and I tried to use as much as I could. I never acted like a boss; before I would do anything I would ask and not act like a boss. I tried to show that I was there only because I was there.

One day Larry asked me to get a new Faro Bank box. I went into the office where there were four or five other boxes and tried the

springs on them. The cards are put in these boxes and come out one at a time. The spring had to have tension on it to bring the cards out. I felt the springs and found one that was better than the others and took it out and gave it to Larry. I set it down; he shuffled the cards and started to put them in the box. He stopped, put the cards down and got up. I was standing there and asked what was the matter.

Larry said, "I quit."

I said, "What?"

He said, "I just quit." I told him he couldn't do that; he said that he could. I asked what was wrong.

He said, "I've never done anything wrong in my life, and I'm not going to start now. That's a deuce box; you can deal the second card out of that box."

I had no idea having never seen one and didn't know what it was. I had to tell him that I certainly didn't know that it was a jimmied-up box and that I was sorry and would get another one. He sat back down and started to deal again. This shows how naive I was and the caliber of people we had mostly in the business at that time.

In Reno at that time, the "line" was wide open. The girls would come up from the "cribs;" the police would let them come up after two o'clock in the morning to play. The pimps would come with them. It was part of our business. At ten o'clock they would have to be off the street.

It was a very strange thing. There was such a conglomeration of people in Reno at that time. The drug problems of today with young people were there then, but in a different way, with the older people. There was a certain class of people that went down to the different houses and smoked opium on Saturday night. It was like going out and having a drink. A dozen or two dozen men and women would go down and smoke the pipe and lay on the

hip on weekends. Everybody knew it. They weren't thought of any more or less, I guess. They were people who were around the business.

The people that came in and out of Reno at the time—"Pretty-boy" Floyd was supposed to be here; Dillinger came in here—these people were protected or were supposed to be protected by Graham and McKay. This was all common knowledge. Everyday you would hear something, somebody would get killed every once in a while or other things were happening. It all seemed the common course of events. Never thought much of it. The papers didn't play it up very much. Reno didn't sound like and I never thought of it as a real great crime center. I didn't think it was because there really wasn't too much going on.

The colorful characters of that time are absolutely unbelievable to the people today. The nicknames they had were thought nothing of then. There was "Cheese-ass Sam," "Popcorn Jimmy," "Alabam," "Ragged-ass Johnny," "Gold-tooth Camel," the "Dago Kid," the "Oregon Apple," "Titanic Thompson." These people came and went through Reno all the time; you knew them, you heard of them.

There was a story about a rooming house that a lady had. A guy came to town looking for a friend of his in the gambling business named "Gold-tooth Camel." The man went to the boarding house and asked the lady if there was anybody living there named "Gold-tooth Camel." She said no. The man said that he was supposed to have stayed there.

The lady said, "Maybe he was supposed to, but he didn't."

"But, do you think he's ever been here?" the man asked.

She says, "Well, I don't know. I've got 'Cheese-ass Sam,' 'Popcorn Jimmy' and 'Alabam,' but I ain't got no 'Gold-tooth Camel.'"

That was a true story and one I thought very funny and very apropos of the time because these people, it's a cliché to say their word was their bond, but it was, more or less. Most of them would cheat you or beat you most anyway they could, but, if they told you they were going to do something they would.

Again my curiosity led me to make friends with most of these people. There wasn't any that I didn't learn something from. I think that my reputation was, even at twenty-three or twenty-four, in the gambling business that if somebody told me something, I wouldn't talk about it a lot. So I used to hear a lot of things. People used to tell me things they wouldn't tell anybody else. Especially if somebody made a score and just had to tell somebody about it because they were so proud of it. They would tell me because they were pretty sure I wouldn't say anything about it. I always wanted to know how they did it and when they would do it. I'd have them come in the backroom and show me how they did it, if they did it with cards or dice. I wanted to know. I never tried to do these things myself, but I talked to all these people who were so good, that showed me, that I became pretty much of an expert in that line of the gaming business. People that were dealing seconds, people that were switching dice, people that were fixing Roulette wheels. There were some fantastically great ways that they could take the ball of a wheel and make it drop into the number they wanted it to. I saw all these things, saw them fix them, saw them do it. It was a very interesting thing and probably something that very few people got to see. I saw most all the facets of it. It certainly did help me; I found out what was going on and how it was being done.

While I was working on the floor of the Palace Club we used to have some of the highest rolling short card games in the

United States. People would come from all over the world to play poker. Mostly they played Lowball. For those days, they played for some very high stakes. Somebody to win or lose thirty or forty thousand dollars wasn't unusual. In '39 or '40 that was a lot of money.

Francis Lyden, who had brought me down here and later we weren't getting along, did a lot of gambling. My job was to go and take the money off the game every hour. I think it was six dollars from every player every hour. In these high rolling games that was good income for the club. I would be very quiet and not say anything as I took the money off because these people were some of the greatest gamblers of all time. I'm pretty sure that Joe Bernstein played in those games at times. Felix Turillas, the old man, was a great poker player and played in them. "Titanic" Thompson played. Francis Lyden played, but he was a little bit out of his class, but he loved to gamble.

To show what kind of gambler Francis Lyden was, there's this story. I met Francis first in Butte when I was about twenty, and he was twenty-two. He was one of the coolest looking guys I'd ever seen. Clear blue eyes with a hat pulled down over them, dressed in a tailor-made suit, tailor-made shirts and ties, a very smooth guy. He really looked like a gambler. I thought it was the greatest thing in the world if I could be just like him. Francis won ninety thousand dollars when he was twenty-one playing cards and the horses. A bunch of crooked gamblers found out about this and came to Butte and set up a phony horse-book. They got him to bet on a horse race that was already over and he blew his whole ninety thousand dollars. He was with a guy named "Pinky" Dugan when he lost it. They walked out of the place and down the street to a picture show. They sat through a cowboy picture twice after losing ninety

thousand dollars. They left, remarked that it was a good show and then walked down the street. I think that's cool.

Later on in a poker game in Reno, that Francis was playing in, he asked me to get a bet down for him. He gave me six thousand dollars to bet on a horse, two, two and two, win, place, and show. The horse was about eight or nine to one, and I had to hustle to get the money down because one book wouldn't take it, but I got all the money down. He had six thousand dollars bet, and I think the race came off about three o'clock. I was on needles and pins wondering what the horse was going to do. Finally the race was run; he came in third. So Francis just about got his money back. I went back to the game to take off the vigish for that hour and Francis never asked me how the horse had done. The next two times I went in he never asked me how the horse had done. He hadn't been out, but he knew the race had been over for two hours. At seven o'clock, he came out and walked toward the door. When he was about to the door he turned back and looked at the race board and saw that the horse had come in third and then he went in to get a cup of coffee. That's cool.

Francis later lost his job there and became a gambler and lost all his money. Eventually he became a heroin addict and died. It was a tragic thing because he was a bright man, very smart. He had a wife and a couple of kids. What I thought had been a great deal of "cool" might have been drugs, but, I don't think he took them when he was young. He did have an illness that started him on the heroin. I'm sure that he wasn't a guy that started taking heroin for kicks, but I think he took it for pain and became hooked on it.

That was all for the cool things about him, but there were other things. When we were younger he came over to Great Falls and asked me to go out and party. He asked me to get

some girls. I got a couple of pretty nice girls, not for an orgy, but an ordinary party. We went to his room, and he ordered champagne. This was a big thing for me and for the girls. Francis had about a six carat diamond ring on.

One of the girls said, "Oh, Francis, that's the prettiest diamond I ever saw. Can I try it on?"

He said yes, and she put it on. The party went on 'til about five o'clock in the morning. The girls were going to go home.

He came to me and said, "Warren, I didn't get my ring back." I told him to go get it. He said, "I don't know how." I brought the girl over, reached over and took the ring and gave it to him. I found out he knew a lot about gambling but not very much about girls or the ordinary things in life.

Francis Lyden had a great deal to do with my thinking about gambling, probably more negative than positive. Bill Panelli was probably, in my opinion, the most procedure correct gambler—knew more about the nitty-gritty than anybody.

Through 1940 I worked every day in the pit, working hard, making money in the summertime, losing money in the wintertime, but always a little bit more win than lose. I enjoyed working for John Petricciani; he was a very fair man. He was very stern looking man, but a good family man in one way, but in another way not. Mainly a fine man, very, very honorable. When he said he'd do something he did it. He certainly treated me very well. He gave me the latitude and tools to learn the business. He never tried to hold anything back; he let me do just about anything I wanted to as far as the Palace Club was concerned.

The Palace Club was one of only three places in town then. The Bank Club, the Palace Club and about that time a little joint by the name of Harolds Club opened up. Everybody

laughed at Harolds Club because they had mice in the window. They were running electronic Roulette wheels and mice Roulette wheels and didn't even have a "21" game and didn't know anything about Keno. They were sort of the laughingstock for everybody. Harold Smith was running it at the time; he was about my age. He decided that besides running the place he was also a player. Harold would work all day and make twenty-five or thirty dollars in nickels and dimes, then come in and lose it playing "21." I guess he learned about as much about the games by playing on the outside as he did dealing on the inside.

The other clubs in town, the hotels and the smaller nightclubs were all cheaters; none of them dealt on the square. The Bank Club and the Palace Club did, also Harolds Club because the volume of business carried them through; but, the other places were just kind of clip joints. We used to go 'round and watch them and try to figure out what they were doing and how they would do it. This was something else I learned about the business, a seamy side that I didn't approve of even then. But, nobody ever said anything about it; it was an unwritten law that you didn't go 'round saying this guy cheats and that guy cheats; it just wasn't done.

The people in the business mixed back and forth with each other. One was as well respected as the other. A lot of the people who later became real big names in the business started that way.

When I came to Reno in May 1936 and opened a Keno game for John Petricciani, it was the first one ever run by a white man in the state of Nevada. Francis Lyden, who brought me down, was a good Keno man and knew the business, but he wasn't working in it; he was working on the floor. I had the job of running it. I started out at twelve dollars a day; in those days that was a good job.

We started out using what they call a "wooden goose." It was a little, wooden, pear-shaped deal about twelve or fourteen inches long that kicked out little peas—numbered peas—they were called peas, but were really markers with one to eighty numbers on them. We used that to open the game.

The Keno game as it was originally run and as we ran it in Montana was done with little squares of paper with numbers written on them. We would take these little squares of paper, the original way was to wad them up individually then put them in a big pan and shake them up. Then distribute them into four other pans—twenty numbers in each pan. This was the way the Chinese ran the game in the early days—about the time of the building of the Chinese Wall, supposedly that is when Keno started. I believe it is probably one of the oldest gambling games in the world, except the dice they used to shoot craps with for Christ's clothes; the Chinese Wall was before that. The four pans meant north, east, west, and south. Each number from one to eighty meant something, maybe it meant wind, flowers, grass, whatever. The Chinese would put combinations of the things together. However, when it was brought to America just the numbers one to eighty were used. The numbers were put into the four pans, then somebody from the outside would have a drawing with four numbers in one pan and pick out which pan would be called; then those numbers in that pan would be called.

When we came to Reno and started this other way, we would draw twenty numbers straight out of the goose instead of putting them in four pans. The old-time gamblers said we were losing our percentage because when you did it the old way right away you were eliminating sixty numbers that absolutely could not come up. The new way you were

drawing the numbers through the whole twenty, so all the time somebody would have a better chance to win. This was not true. My knowledge of mathematics, from Father Rooney, stood me in good stead and has many times since because I know that when a formula comes up it cannot be refuted, that that's the way it is and there's no way you can change numbers. The percentage was there and nobody could change it.

We ran that way for several months. I got an idea about a cage I had seen in southern California where they used pingpong balls. I thought that would be a lot easier for the people to see. I went to Los Angeles and they had a cage that they used on the beach for bingo. We altered it some and used it. It's still the same way we're drawing the balls now.

The limit then was two thousand dollars per game; now it's twenty-five thousand dollars. The game has changed and grown so much. It's sort of my baby because that's where I cut my teeth in the gambling business, and I've always stayed very close to the Keno game.

The third or fourth day that I worked for Mr. Petricciani, he was working on a small bankroll and we knew it. The limit was two thousand dollars, and we were writing ten cent tickets and maybe taking in two or three hundred dollars a day. By the time we would pay the wages there would be a winning of fifty or sixty dollars a day for the first few days. It didn't look that good even though it was picking up.

There was an old Chinaman who worked down on the line for the girls—ran errands and picked up the towels and things. I can't remember his name; he was a real famous guy, laughed all the time. He played a fifty cent ticket and got an eight spot that paid nine hundred dollars. When I looked at that ticket I almost fainted. I thought, how am I going to go to this man I barely know and ask for nine

hundred dollars. I felt that he might think we were ripping him off because that was a lot of money in those days.

I finally got up my courage and went to Mr. Petricciani and said, "We got hit for a fifty cent ticket, and I need nine hundred dollars."

He said, "Yes my boy, come on in the office." He took me in and reached in the safe and gave me nine one hundred dollar bills. I asked if I could have ten dollar bills. He asked why, and I said it looked like more money. He gave me nine hundred dollars in ten dollar bills. I went and got my Chinese friend and took him on the outside of the counter and counted down—ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety and one hundred. Did the same nine times. Those bills strung along the counter probably looked like ten thousand dollars. I think that as much as anything else has made the genie go forward because from then on it's been always up; the game has gotten progressively better.

We had a lot of different kinds of tickets and learned a lot about it. Nobody else in Reno opened a game for about a year. It really built up the Palace Club; it came along better and better all the time. It drew crowds and nobody else could run the game. Finally, a couple of boys from Butte came down and opened one in the Bank Club. One opened in Harolds Club, but Harolds Club wasn't very proficient and people used to go in there and write phony tickets. The people there didn't know how to check so they had quite a time running the game.

However, our end of it was very professional. We knew the business well. All the people that I brought with me from Montana were young people, but they knew the mathematics and we were very fast and very proud of how fast we could write tickets and how fast we could check them; so it was really a going thing.

There was still one Chinese place in Reno that ran a Keno game—two games a day. We started out running a game every hour. I decided we ought to get more action so we started a game every half hour, then every fifteen minutes, then every ten minutes and then every time we got a ticket practically. The game became more and more fast. People liked to play it because they got the action; we were running ten or twelve games an hour, sometimes fourteen games an hour. Now business is so good you can't get that many.

While I was a young floorman there were only two joints in town, the Bank Club and the Palace Club. Graham and McKay had gone to prison and Jack Sullivan was running the Bank Club. Jack Sullivan was an old ex-bouncer, prizefighter, a tough old man. I would imagine at that time he was fifty-five years old. A big, tall, straight-looking man who carried a cane all the time and had a reputation for being real tough. Sullivan and Petricciani didn't get along. They did go back and forth trying to keep wages straight and things like that. One time they were going to cut the wages in a bad winter. Sullivan had left town; we lowered the wages, and the other place didn't so it created a big hassle.

I became good friends on a business basis with Jack Sullivan. He taught me many things. One day he came into the Palace Club, I was twenty-three or twenty-four years old.

He walked up to me, and I said, "Good afternoon Mr. Sullivan, can I help you?"

He stamped his cane down, looked at me and said, "What could you do for me!"

I said, "Well Mr. Sullivan, there's something you can do for me, you can go to hell!" He turned around and walked away.

Later on when I was in the Marine Corps, I was up on furlough and went around and had a drink or two. He came over and said, "Kid, anything I can do for you?"

I said, "What can you do for me!"

He said, "This," and put four one hundred dollar bills in my pocket and told me to have a good time.

I gave them back to him and said politely, "Thank you Jack, but I don't need it." I did appreciate it.

Later on I had a place, the Waldorf Club. I was having a real tough time, things were going real bad. Jack Sullivan was a pretty old man then. He came in one day and asked how I was getting along. I said fine, but he said he had heard I wasn't doing too good.

I said, "Well Mr. Sullivan, you always had bad information."

He said, "If you're not doing very good, if you want ten thousand dollars I'll give it to you."

I thanked him and said I didn't need it. That wasn't true; I did need it, but I didn't take it. This shows what kind of people they were. As bad as Mr. Sullivan's reputation was on some things, you have to say there were a lot of good things about him.

Another incident happened with him later on when I was manager of Harrah's Club. We had a player playing who owed Sullivan fifty thousand dollars. The man was the head of a big milk company from the Middle West; he had come out here and bought Manogue High School and did a lot of charity work. He was playing Faro Bank one day and Sullivan came up to him and tapped him on the shoulder and said something to him. He got up, cashed in and gave Sullivan two thousand dollars of the fifty thousand dollars he owed him, then they both walked out.

This was absolutely unheard of; nobody would do that; it was unethical. I guess Sullivan couldn't help himself. I left word at the cage that the next time our player came in to call me. Two or three days later here he came with ten thousand dollars and started to

play. He had played awhile when here comes Sullivan. When Sullivan walked in I was called. He sat at the bar, hung his cane on the bar. I waited about fifteen or twenty minutes, watched him and the guy playing.

Finally, I went over to Mr. Sullivan and said, "Jack, I wonder if you realize what would happen to me if I came into the Bank Club and asked somebody that owed me money to pay me while he was playing? What do you think would happen?" He just kind of looked at me, so I said, "I'll tell you what would happen. One of those big bouncers would come over and get me by the ass of the pants and throw me out the door." I told him if he ever bothered this man while he was playing that was what I was going to do. I was probably thirty-six then and he was sixty-five; I'm not sure I could have done it.

He stood up, stamped his cane on the floor, looked me straight in the eye and said, "Kid, you're right." Then he walked out the door; that was the last time he ever did that.

In those days, the limit at the Palace Club was fifty dollars. We had quite a lot of play. There was a lot of play on the nickel slot machines, no play on the quarters, halves and dollars. We counted all the nickels by hand; there were no money counting machines of any kind. The slot machines were very tight. Most of the play was on Faro Bank, most of the high rolling play was. There was some Pan and Poker, "21," Craps and the wheel of course, but the main event was Faro Bank. Keno added a great deal to the bottom line of the gambling house. I would say in those days we had eight "21" games, two Craps at the most, one wheel—sometimes two, two Faro Bank games, a Keno game and about seventy-five or eighty slots. That was considered a big gambling house in those days. Compared to now it was very, very small.

It was a great deal of fun working at the Palace Club. I think that cutting my eye-teeth in the business there with Bill Panelli and other old-timers taught me a lot and as I went along I taught others myself.

Along with the work, I did a lot of hunting and fishing. Duck hunting in Fallon, deer hunting all over the state, but, never being gone longer than a day. Many a time I'd get off work at two o'clock in the morning, get to a fishing spot at six o'clock, fish all day and get back just in time to go to work at six o'clock that evening. Many times twenty-four hours without any sleep, but with the fresh air it didn't seem so bad.

In November of '41, I was working in the pit and got a pain in my side that got progressively worse. I couldn't find anybody to relieve me, so I stayed there until the next shift relieved me. I went home; the pain was bad. I called the doctor who came out to look at me. He told me I had appendicitis. He sent me to the hospital; I had a burst appendix. I was operated on sometime in the last part of November. Because of the burst appendix I was supposed to have a little longer recuperation than an ordinary appendectomy. It was duck hunting season, and I was real concerned about missing all that hunting.

So, on the seventh of December, four or five fellows that I hunted with all the time took me hunting out to Fallon. I couldn't carry the gun or decoys, but they carried them for me. They took me to the edge of the water and set me down; they went further into the swamp. It was a good day for hunting. The wind was blowing. I sat there between six o'clock and eleven o'clock and killed a limit of green-heads, all male ducks. Waited for the guys to come back, picked up the ducks and went back to the car. We turned on the radio and found out about Pearl Harbor. You can

imagine the conversation that went back and forth between us on the way back to Reno.

When we got back to Reno we went down to enlist in the Marine Corps. They naturally wouldn't take me because of the recent operation. I decided I was going into the Marine Corps and started to prepare for it. I knew it would take me about a year if I used my head. So I started saving my money. I finally went to the old man, John Petricciani, and told him I was going into the Marine Corps.

He said, "My boy, my boy, you're kidding." I said I wasn't kidding; I was going to go. He said I didn't have to go. I told him I would have to go sooner or later, and I wanted to go now or in the fall.

One day I came downtown and he called me up to meet him in the office. When I got there he had some papers for me to sign. The papers said that if I didn't join the Marine Corps he would give me twenty-five percent of the Palace Club.

I said, "John, thanks, but I'm going to have to go, so I'm going to go."

Later I went and that was the end of my marriage because my wife didn't think I was going to go, but when she found out I really was she said that was the end. It was, and another part of my life began.

I had a friend by the name of Howard Keogh. Howard was about eight years younger than me. He came to Reno a couple of years previous to this with another fellow named Hughie Connolly who was also younger than me. I put them to work shilling even though they weren't twenty-one and started teaching them how to deal. This started a great friendship for the three of us, and we've been together more or less ever since.

I told them of my decision to join the Marine Corps. They said we would join together and go together. I thought that

sounded like a hell of an idea. We were going over and make the world safe for democracy and kill all the Japs. These boys were both unmarried and younger than me; I was near thirty. They went all over the country from war job to war job—to Hawthorne and then to Seattle to work in the airplane factories—to keep out of the service until I could get my affairs straightened out to go. When I decided that I could go, they came back to Reno with the draft board breathing down their necks. Then we all went down and joined together.

MILITARY SERVICE, 1942-1946

We joined in San Francisco. The first thing to happen was they wouldn't take Hughie Connally because he had been an amateur fighter and had so many teeth knocked out. They wouldn't take him until he had some bridges made, so he came in two weeks behind us.

Howard and I went to boot camp together. It was a terrible transition for me. I was almost thirty years old, had worked in a gambling house almost all my life and here I was in a platoon with sixty fellows, none of them over twenty-one. I could do anything they could do, but I couldn't do it as long because I'd wear out.

These young fellas would come in all pooped out at the end of the day and lay down; you'd think they were gonna die, and thirty minutes later they'd be up playin' uh—touch football or something. When I come in from a day, I lay down and couldn't get up again, missed many a meal that way. Although I was in pretty fair shape going in, it was very difficult for me.

We got sent to the rifle range, Camp Elliott, and while there, I contracted pneumonia, the thing they call "cat fever." I had a temperature of a hundred and five and was very ill. Howard was real worried about me and went to the drill instructor, and he finally sent me to the hospital. These guys were so tough, it'd be hard to believe the things that they did to the recruits at that time. However, I made it to the hospital, and I was real lucky I didn't die. I stayed very, very sick for awhile. There was a corpsman there who kept changing the sheets and moving me from bed to bed because of the high temperature and the perspiration that I was coming with. Probably if it hadn't been for him I wouldn't have made it.

I was in the hospital probably three weeks and came out, and I was very weak. I got out about Christmas time, and the doctor there asked me where I lived. I told him Reno, Nevada.

He says, "Well, you know you can't go up there because it's out of the bounds, but I want to give you a four-day furlough, and if some

way you should find a way—find yourself up there, why I wouldn't worry about it."

So I went out and hitched a ride and got to Reno, spent Christmas here, and at that time I found out that I would never stay married again that—and that was the beginning of the end as far as my first marriage was concerned.

I went back to the Marine Corps, and naturally I'd been split up with Howard and Hughie, each went their different directions. I suppose that Howard was very, always was worried about what would happen to me, and we stayed very close, still are.

When I got out of boot camp, we were taken into a new section of the Marine Corps; it was called Personnel Classification. And this classification consisted of taking classification tests and mechanical tests and bein' interviewed as to what you were probably best at—what was the best place to put you in the Marine Corps.

The interviewer that interviewed me, his name was Killian; he became a friend and I still see him once in awhile. But he was an older man, older than I was at that time, probably in his forties.

During his interview he said, "Well you're gonna go on light duty now because of just getting out of the hospital and everything." And he said, "What would you like to do in the Marine Corps?" He'd taken my job—my job classification and found out that I was a pit boss.

He said, "What the hell's a pit boss?" I explained it to him. "Well what would you like to do in the Marine Corps?"

I said, "Well of all the jobs I've seen, the one I like best is yours. I'd like to have your job."

Well he kind of laughed, and he called a man over, a captain and said, "Captain, this man would like to have my job.

And this captain said, "You would?"

And I said, "Yes."

He picked up the card that the man had just made out, had all my qualifications on it, and said, "Well, that's interesting." He says, "How long'd you work in a gambling house?"

I said, "Since I was eighteen," so that had been about eleven years, maybe twelve years.

And he said, "What is a pit boss?" And I told him, give credit, in charge of all the personnel.

This man's name was Presley. He was a captain in the Marine Corps and had been brought in particularly for classification. His job in civilian life, he was the head personnel man for Disney Studios. He was very, very knowledgeable about job classifications and that sort of thing and knew what he was doing. He talked to me for a little while and wanted to know what a pit boss was, and I explained it to him.

He said, "Well that's very interesting." He said, "I'd like to have you." He says, "I'd like to have you come to work for me, but," he says, "it depends on how you come out on your AGCT, your Army General Classification Test, and the other mechanical aptitude tests."

So we took the tests that day, and I didn't know how I came out on it. I knew it wasn't too good, and I was amazed two weeks later when I got out of boot camp that I was called in the classification section. I later found out that my AGCT test was 113, I believe, and you had to be 110 in order to go to officer's training class, but most of the bright people were up from 120 to 135.

I went into the unit with about fifty men. They taught us how to interview, how to conduct tests and all the other things to make us experts in classifying new Marines and the Marines that were already in. This was new so the Marines that were already in had never been classified. This pool of fifty men was to travel all over to the bases to classify the other Marines.

This was something that was very interesting. Having been around people as much as I had in the gambling business it was easy for me to talk to these young fellows and draw them out. I was very interested in the testing end of it.

I interviewed people well, and the main thing they started to do was having me conduct these tests. My voice was always good and strong, so I was able to test a good many people at one time giving these tests at different locations. Actually, I became sort of the chief tester and gave 10 tests to as many as twenty thousand Marines at one time. That's how fast we were turning them out.

We started out in San Diego and later got split up into two groups, and I traveled the Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth Naval Districts for almost two years just catching up with the people in the Marine Corps that hadn't had these classification tests or hadn't been classified.

Captain Presley was a very good man, a very nice man and helped me along a lot. He was sent overseas and that was my object too. I told him to be sure and send for me; he said he would. When he got over there he wrote back to me and told me there was no reason for me to go overseas because I could do a better job in the states and for me to stay there.

I think that two weeks after I got out of boot camp, I made corporal; two weeks later I made sergeant, and a month later I made staff sergeant. And that's probably as fast a rise you'd ever see in the service. However, it was in wartime and they needed the help very bad. I stayed a staff sergeant for eighteen months and then went to tech sergeant.

I spent four years in the Marine Corps, all of it in personnel classification, moved around a great deal and wound up in the Department of Pacific in San Francisco. I transferred a hundred and twenty-nine times, and my

papers showing my transfers in the Marine Corps had to be higher than my head when they were stacked up. When I finally got sent into San Francisco, I had traveled from Seattle down to San Diego as far east as Denver and all over the Pacific northwest and southwest, as far as that's concerned. We traveled in a group and finally we went to every place they had a Marine station, and this included the recruiting offices in each little town. Had the opportunity to go back into Butte, Montana, and Great Falls, Montana, my home town, to interview the people there and give them the tests that had to be given. It was a pretty satisfying job because you were able in some ways to help people do what they really wanted to do in the Marine Corps which had never happened before.

I finally got sent to San Francisco, and we were stationed at Oak Knoll Hospital. I was there for quite awhile with a group handling people that came back from overseas. It was a pretty depressing thing because you'd get men come back that had their legs shot off and arms shot off; they had to be tested and all. And most of them were pretty pitiful. It was a job that was real hard to do because of the people you had to handle. We also went through all the Marine Corps prisons and did those people, and that was very depressing too. However, the good part of it was that you were able to help a lot of young people and send them after they came back from overseas and send them close to their home towns where they wanted to go. So it compensated for the depressing part of it, compensated by the good things you could do. I became very interested in this type of work and thought I was really fitted for it.

I was transferred to San Francisco and got a new commanding officer. I became very well acquainted with him; his name was Bernard J. Alpers; he was also a captain. He

was a Jewish fellow, one of the nicest men I've ever become acquainted with. He had worked for the government and was the person who had written the book on military occupational specialties, the MOS booklet. He asked me to do this. He gave me some people to interview and told me to write job descriptions of them. I'm not a very good writer, but I started picking apart what these jobs consisted of and pretty soon I was making up titles and helping him with the book. I think the Marine Corps book still says "This book compiled by Bernard J. Alpers, Captain, and Technical Sergeant Warren Nelson." I always appreciated that and thought at one time I was part author to a book.

We became very close friends. I was a tech sergeant at that time, and he was a captain. He let me do just about the way I wanted to do, and I was able to travel at my own time just about wherever I wanted to go on the Pacific coast or in the Twelfth Naval District.

As technical as the job was, Alpers was a very fair man and not at all military. His job was far from what the ordinary man would be doing in the Marine Corps. I was transferred many times, but only temporarily. I'd go out on a job and meet a lot of opposition to getting people tested. The old-time Marine Corps officers didn't believe in it; they thought they should be able to put the people where they wanted to and not where the classification said they should go, that they should make all the decisions. So, they would fight it. When I'd get one like that, because I was a sergeant there wasn't much that I could do, so I'd just say, "Yes, Sir."

Then I would call up the captain who would call the reluctant officer and say, "Colonel, Captain Alpers, Headquarters, Department of the Pacific. This just came out of Washington; if you don't want to agree with Washington, you say so and I'll write this up."

The next day I would go back and the officer would do anything he could for me. I learned to do this pretty well and really learned my way around the Marine Corps.

Hawthorne, Nevada was one of the places that I went to frequently, and then all the Marine bases in and around San Francisco. The captain would go for a couple of months, and knowing that I lived in Reno would say, "Well, Warren, don't you think you ought to go over to Hawthorne and see how the first sergeant's getting along over there?"

So I'd go over, and my job then was instructing first sergeants at the various bases on what to do and how to take care of their classification records and how to classify any new people that came in. It was a lot of fun, and I'd come through Reno with a seventy-two hour leave going and a seventy-two hour leave coming, so I got to see quite a bit of Reno at that time.

I became very interested in what was going in Hawthorne, and business there was fantastic. The business that they were doing was unbelievable. Before the war somebody that I haven't mentioned previously, my brother-in-law Pick Hobson, had a brother by the name of Joe [Hobson] and we sent him down to Hawthorne to open up a small gambling house in about 1940. I was offered the job down there at a gambling house by a guy by the name of Slim Russell that wanted me to come down there and go to work. I turned it down, and let Joe take it.

Joe was down there eighteen months and came back, handed me a hundred thousand dollars in thousand dollar bills and says, "Here kid, put this in the safe for me."

About that time, the failure of my marriage, a lack of money and other things were bugging me. I was stationed in San Francisco. A friend of mine asked if I'd like to deal Craps on weekends at a place in El

Cerrito. I decided that would be a great thing, so for a year I worked as a Crap dealer, Wheel dealer and "21" dealer in El Cerrito.

El Cerrito was run by Pechart and Kessel, two famous gamblers of that time. I didn't know too much about them, but they really had something going; they were making a lot of money.

Tips were fantastic. I'd go to work at seven o'clock at night; my Marine Corps job would be over at four. I'd travel across the bridge with some of the other dealers. I had to wear my uniform because you couldn't take it off at that time. I would go into the cloakroom and change into a civilian suit that belonged to a friend of mine who outweighed me by about thirty pounds. It was a double-breasted suit and I couldn't keep the pants up.

I was pretty scared going to work, scared because the Marine Corps might catch me. It was a court-martial offense to be out of uniform. Also, the gambling wasn't exactly legal; there was always the chance of a raid. The money was so good that I chanced it. I would easily make two or three hundred dollars a week just working Saturday and Sunday. If somebody got sick I'd work the whole week. I probably learned as much about the gambling business there as I had in my previous experience.

The dealers were more or less going for themselves; they were really stealing from the bosses. I could see this stuff going on. A friend of mine came over to me and asked if I knew what was going on. I said I did and had thought about quitting. He said not to worry about it, the bosses knew what was going on to some extent and for me to keep my mouth shut. I watched what was going on and could see that the bosses knew what was going on. Everybody was getting just about one hundred dollars a day besides their tips and wages, was what it amounted to.

Observing this and seeing how it was done has probably given me more insight on how to protect myself in the business than anything that ever happened before. Many of these people are still in the business. Good men, I don't say they are dishonest; I don't think they were really dishonest then. I think the bosses sort of said you do this because Pechart, Kessel and a man named "Bones" Remmer, who ran the place, would not pay them more than fifteen dollars a day. Wages were higher in other places and these people thought they had it coming and they took it. "Bones" Remmer, who has been dead many years now, was a famous guy at that time. The dealers got their fifteen dollars a day and tips plus one meal. They had a dining room there that fed the players who were mostly Jewish people, black-market people with lots of money to show around. The players got the finest steaks and wine while the dealers got pot roast. One night four or five dealers were sitting there and one of them was pouring catsup on his pot roast. "Bones" Remmer came along and saw him doing this.

He called a waiter over and said, "Get that catsup off that table; those are dealers sitting there and that catsup costs four bits a bottle on the black-market, get it off that table."

One dealer looked at another and said, "No catsup, huh? How much do you think the fine should be?"

The other dealer said, "How about five hundred dollars." The other agreed, so the first thing they did when they got back to the tables was steal five hundred dollars and put it in the tokes. So that catsup went from fifty cents to five hundred dollars.

The first night I worked on that job I had this suit on I had borrowed from my friend. My pants would slip all the time. I would roll the ball, clean the layout and then when I would try to roll the ball again I'd have to

unbutton the coat, reach down and pull up my pants. There was a second dealer on the wheel, an old man I'd never met before named Poffenberg.

After about an hour of that he leaned over and said, "Kid, are you wearing a sub?" I said no I wasn't. He asked if I was sure and I said yes. He then said, "God, I was sure you had a sub on. I wore one for twenty years and the first time I took it off was like going without my underwear."

A sub is a pocket that fits under your belt in the front part of your pants. It was used by crooked dealers for years to slip money into when nobody was looking. They could slip it under their belt into the pocket and then cleanup after they got off the table. I think this is a good example of the old days in the gambling business and the difference between things that went on then and now.

Going back and forth on the bridge every night to the gambling house in El Cerrito was a great experience. I had a roommate in the Marine Corps while stationed in San Francisco. We were getting subsistence and quarters and living downtown in a hotel. The extra money gave me a chance to eat in the finest places and do things I ordinarily wouldn't have been able to do.

I would come up to Reno at every opportunity to observe and talk to my friends in the gambling business. By this time, although not divorced, my marriage was over.

I was transferred one hundred twenty-six times in two years. Temporary duty to different places for three days, four days, five days, maybe ten days at a time. My job was to go into a Marine Corps station like Hawthorne or Fallon, it could be anyplace in the bay area, Thirteenth Naval District. I was to give instructions to first sergeants, so I became widely acquainted throughout the Marine Corps. I became so interested

in this work—I was doing interviewing, job descriptions, classification work—that I thought very strongly of doing that when I got out of the Marine Corps. I talked to Captain Alpers about this, and he thought it was a good idea. He would help me get that kind of a job when the war was over.

The thing that stopped me was that I would have to start out as a class three in civil service, which was about six thousand dollars a year. In the meantime, I had been contacted by Bill Harrah to open up Harrah's Club. This was late in '45 when he first contacted me. Right after that was when they dropped the bomb on Hiroshima, and the war, to some extent, was over.

The day the Japs quit, there was a little gal in Headquarters, Department of the Pacific, who was a master sergeant and practically ran the whole outfit. I called her Sergeant Futter, talked to her a great deal, got my orders from her whenever I went out of town. I had never dated the four years I was in the Marine Corps and was a little hesitant about it. I'd arranged to get a divorce and was in the process. I asked this girl for a first date and we started to go together. I brought her to Reno two or three times; then we decided to get married. She was a master sergeant, and I was a technical sergeant; she outranked me by one rank. She had all the juice there was in the Marine Corps, she was so well liked. Her commanding officer was a major, and there was a warrant officer in the office also. These people knew my background and were very protective of her, wondering why that poor little girl was going to marry a gambler ten years her senior. What kind of a life would she have. I'm sure they did everything they could to talk her out of it.

It looked like I was going to have to stay in the Marine Corps, but after being contacted by Bill Harrah, she did everything she could to

get me out. In fact, I got out four days sooner than she did.

We drove down to Los Angeles from San Francisco to meet Bill Harrah to buy some new equipment for the impending opening of Harrah's. She and I went to Las Vegas and got married on the fourteenth of February, 1946. It started a whole new life for me as far as marriage is concerned.

HARRAH'S CLUB, 1946-1948

Pat and I were married in Las Vegas on the fourteenth of February 1946 and came to Reno. I had already made arrangements to go to work at Harrah's Club. We got here in February, and Harrah's Club didn't open 'til June. So I went to work in the Bonanza Club; it's now where Harrah's Club is on Center Street.

There was a bunch of old buddies working in there, old-timers—Jack Duffy one of the fine top people in the gambling business, Howard Farris who is still my partner, Eddie Margolis who is now dead, but ran the place, very nice man and a good man in our business, been dead many years.

Johnny Acuff who I had known before the war was working there, and he and I remained good friends (and he by the way has also been dead five or six years), but he was also a very nice man. He and I were splitting tips. I was dealin' "21," and he was dealin' the wheel. Well historically a wheel dealer doesn't make any tokens, so I was really carrying Johnny. I only worked there about a month, and the house changed hands.

"Sundown" Wells took it over, and Sundown was quite an old character known far and wide. And he was a good friend of mine, but I didn't care to work for him. And so I quit the day he took over just because I didn't want anybody to know that I worked for Sundown Wells. This is not derogatory to him personally, but it's just the way I felt the way he ran a gambling house.

I then left there and went to work for Harrah as sort of a "clerk of the works," and along with bein' a clerk of the works and helping push the remodeling of the Harrah's Club as it was then on Virginia Street. It was thirty-five feet wide and a hundred and forty feet long, not a big place by any means.

When Bill Harrah started to do something he always did it right. He really was going first class in the way he handled it. I was very, very impressed the way he did things because everything had to be just so. One of the things that he was doing, he was building it using the signs of the zodiac as a sort of a—logo, and everything went to that end. One of the things that really bugged me is that Bill is a very quiet

person, and he'd come in and ask a question and get an answer. But he come in one day, and they just finished a bar, and I was very interested in the bar because they were covering it with gold leaf. And I asked the painter or the man that was applying it if that was real gold; he said yes and told me how thin it was; but still it was a considerable amount of gold being implanted on the bar. When they got it laid, then they covered it with some kind of resin to keep it from peeling, and when it got all done it didn't look nearly as well as I thought it would.

Harrah came in and looked at it, and he said, "Warren, what do you think of that?"

And I says, "Well, it didn't turn out just the way I thought it would, but it's all right."

He said, "Well, you don't like it?"

And I said, "Well, no."

He turned to the guy, and he said, "Take it off."

[I said] "Wait a minute, don't do that." I said, "That's gold."

He says, "I don't care what it is, if it don't look good, it don't look good." So they put some paint remover on it and scraped that gold in a bucket.

I asked the guy, "Could we retrieve that?" He says I don't think so, maybe they could or maybe they couldn't; but anyway that was the end of the gold leaf bar. But that was the way Bill Harrah did things.

I worked very, very hard as a laborer even getting things together pushing and pulling. At that time labor was a problem. It was hard to get the people to work, and they'd go off in a corner; and I guess everybody was used to doin' war work because it was really a mess the way they were doing it. And we were quite a bit behind the time that we thought we should open. Anyway, I had made a deal with Bill Harrah to go in there, and I was to have five percent of the Keno. And after I had started working around there, and I was the only one that had

ever worked in a regular gambling house of all the executives. There was Bob Ring, Wayne Martin and Bill Harrah, so it was more or less all up to me; I had to order all the tools, the dice, the cards, and the tables. But it was interesting and fun and just being out among—as far as having a lot of ambition to go ahead and do it.

A couple of nights before it opened, Bill Harrah came to me, and he said, "Warren, I'd like to change our deal."

And I said, "Uh-oh, this is what always happens." I said, "What's the problem?"

He said, "Well, instead of five percent of the Keno, I want you to have five percent of the whole place," which sounded very, very good to me. We opened on the twentieth of June, and the place was an instant success.

On opening night, a friend of mine by the name of Al Winters from Portland came in. Al Winters was the originator of the Sahara in Las Vegas and held the most stock of it when it opened. But this is long before the Sahara opened.

Al came in drunk and came over and said, "Warren, Hi. I want to give you complimentary play. I'm drinkin', don't give me more than three thousand. I want to make a play." So I gave him three thousand, and we had a big limit. Five hundred or a thousand dollars worth was an immense limit for those days, but Harolds Club was dealing that limit so we went along with it.

The dice started to pass, and in almost no time Al Winters was into white hundred dollar chips and had out about twenty thousand dollars. The bankroll that Bill Harrah had put in there amounted to sixty-five thousand. I had told him to begin with, that we needed a minimum of two hundred and fifty. He said I can't get that much— what's the least we can get by? And I finally got it down to a hundred and seventy-five. But on the night before we opened he brought in a satchel with sixty-five thousand in it and said this is all I could get.

The money had to be spread very, very thin in order to bankroll all the games.

Bill came in during the play with Al Winters and called me over, says, "How much are those white checks?"

And I said, "A hundred dollars a piece."

He said, "How much has he got out?"

And I said, "About twenty thousand."

He said, "Close the game."

I said, "No, you can't do that."

He said, "Close it."

I said, "Bill you can't. Bill it's just—it's just— got to do something."

And he says, "I'm goin' downstairs, you come on down."

I says, "Well let me see what I can do with this guy." I went over and said, "Al, how you doin'?"

He said, "Boy, the dice are hot aren't they Warren?"

I said, "Yes."

And he says, "Here," he says, "can I make a bet on six and eight?"

I said, "Sure."

"How much can I bet?"

I said, "Six hundred."

So we placed it for six hundred a piece— twelve hundred— and the dice turned and started to seven away; and within thirty or forty minutes he went downhill as fast as he went uphill, and he was broke and owed the place three thousand. I quit sweating about that time and went down to see Bill.

He said, "What happened?"

I said, "The guy went broke."

He says, "Look, better change the limit."

I said, "Bill, you can't change the limit now. It's our opening night."

He said, "Change it."

[I said] "You can't do that."

He said, "Yes, I can. Change it." So I went up and changed the limit. I thought it would hurt the business, but it didn't; it went on, went like a bomb. That was very, very good business.

We had a lot of high rolling play. Different people were playing—"Nick the Greek," Joe Bernstein, Fritz Zibarth who was an old friend of mine from before the war. Fritz was the electrical contractor for the Hoover Dam, made a lot of money and loved to gamble. I had met him at the Palace Club prior to the war when he came in one day and wanted twenty thousand dollars worth of credit. He was a big, red-faced, burly guy, had on leather puttees, dressed like an engineer.

He walked up to me and he said, "My name's Fritz Zibarth, and I want twenty thousand dollars worth of credit to shoot craps." I didn't know him, but on appearance I said OK. He said, "You're gonna give me twenty thousand?"

I said, "Yes Sir."

And he said, "Well this is the place I want to play. I just came from the Bank Club;" he says, "they wouldn't even talk about cashin' the check." Anyway, we became fast friends, and he was a terrific player. He loved to play, and he was a dangerous player. He played fast and played his money well.

So, when Harrah's Club opened and he came to Reno, he still came and played at Harrah's Club. He was a Faro Bank player, and he had a system called "chops." Chops is merely a progression system that you progress up and progress down in certain units of money, and if you win one more bet than you lose, then you are a winner. It's fairly complicated, but not too complicated. It's easy to play. The increments sometimes change going up and down. People would sit and play chops for hours and hours and not win or lose much either way, but by playing low and the limit that we had, kept them from either winning or losing a lot. But Fritz had been playing chops and winning, but the action was too slow because of the limit.

He said, "If I deposit a hundred thousand dollars with you, would he take the limit off of the Faro Bank if I play strict chops?"

And I said, "Well, let me talk to Mr. Harrah."

I went to Bill and told him the proposition. I said, "I'm absolutely sure that this man has got to go broke. It might take a month; it might take a day or it might take six months, but eventually we're gonna win everything he wins when he wins, and we're also gonna win the hundred thousand."

He said, "Well leave that hundred thousand dollars in the office and all his winnings, so it will always be there." And Bill says, "Are you sure this is all right?" And I said sure.

He started to play, and I guess for maybe twenty or thirty days, he'd win a thousand or fifteen hundred a day every day, hard to beat because of the thing. You have to have a great extreme to beat him, and extremes is what makes gambling to begin with—extremes of winning and losing. If you didn't have those, people wouldn't play, so there's so many things that can happen in gambling. It's very unlikely and the odds against it are astronomical, but you could conceivably roll Roulette and have fifty red numbers in a row. I have never seen fifty red numbers in a row, but I have seen thirty-two. And this was on a square wheel, so this shows what—what the odds are, how these things can go. And it was the same way with this Faro Bank game, that was he had to get the extreme because the extreme winning, he'd keep making smaller bets. But the extreme when he was losing, he made bigger bets, so sometime he had to go over and slop over and get broke. There was no question about it because of the nature of the games. I guess for twenty-five or thirty days, he kept winning everyday, and he was playing on two games, had a little guy called Shorty, a little Italian fellow, that played for him, so the two of them are playing and created a great deal of interest in the town. Gamblers came from all over just to watch them play 'cause he'd get up as high

as betting three or four thousand dollars on a card. He kept on going, and he'd give up and get in sixty-seventy thousand and get out.

A boisterous man, he'd say, "I'm gonna own this joint and we're gonna call it Fritz' place." But all in jest because he was really a gentleman, although he was real noisy.

One day the worm turned, and he got carried up to four or five thousand and then six thousand. All he had to do was lose about eight or nine more bets, and he's broke; and that happened—he went broke. He had promised me that he wouldn't ask us for any more money after he lost the hundred thousand because I didn't want him to go too strong, but he went to old man Harrah, who was quite a character in himself and talked to him, and Harrah gave him twenty-five thousand more.

He started where he left off makin' these high bets, and he probably—he lost within ten minutes he lost—or five minutes he lost the twenty-five thousand.

Showing what kind of a gentleman Fritz was, he came to me and he says, "Warren, I—I don't have that money, but I will have it in a month or so, but I'm going back to Los Angeles and I'll call you." He called me about a month later and said, "Warren I'm coming up tomorrow, and I'll send you that twenty-five thousand."

The next morning I got up, and there was a piece in the paper that Fritz Zibarth had died. I went to Bill Harrah and said what should we do about that twenty-five thousand. He said just forget it because he wouldn't take it from his widow. That was one of the many nice things that Bill Harrah did. I don't agree with many things that—about Bill Harrah, but some of the things he was a very generous, good man.

There was a man that played with us and worked for the city, and he would lose ten thousand dollars; and the ten thousand dollars were fees that he'd collected from the city or the state—I forget which. He came to me and

told me what he had done, and I went to Bill Harrah and Bill gave him back ten thousand dollars to keep him from going to jail. Not many gamblers do these sort of things.

Harrah's was an exciting place. I worked very hard there. I worked ten, twelve, fourteen hours a day. We had a big play with Nicholas Dandolos, Nick the Greek, probably the most famous of all gamblers. He was also a Faro Bank player and Craps, but this particular time he was playing Faro Bank. And he was playing with a guy named Joe Bernstein.

Joe Bernstein, they called him the "Silver Fox of Powell Street." He was from San Francisco, but he became a very famous gambler. He was probably one of the originators that originated counting cards in "21." He was a very, very sharp man. But Joe Bernstein would not pay a marker. If he could get enough credit and lose, why he wouldn't pay. So I had told the people at the Faro Bank game never to give him any credit. He and Nick the Greek were playing, and they took a lot of watching because both of them were very, very smart. One little error and you—you'd had it because they'd figure out a way to win a bet from you that—whether it was legal or not, and they'd usually get their way. So you had to be very careful dealing with them. Nick had quite a bit of class, but still if he got a chance to steal a bet, it was part of his philosophy that if you had to take a little investment and you got a chance, you did it.

But, I came in one day, and Nick the Greek was playing. Joe Bernstein told the dealer, told the shift manager that he had thirty thousand dollars over at the Bank Club and give him ten thousand, and he'd go get it.

I come in, I saw the marker, I said, "Whose marker is that?" And they said Joe Bernstein.

I said, "Joe, you got a ten thousand dollar marker here, but where's the money?"

He said, "Over in the Bank Club."

I said, "Well let's go get it."

He said, "Wait 'til I get done playin'."

I said, "Joe, I don't want to wait 'til you get done playin'; I want the money now." I said, "This is a cash game." And we argued.

He said, "OK, OK. You go get 'em."

I said, "OK." So I wrote out a note, "Please give the bearer, Warren Nelson, ten thousand dollars"—and gave it to him. He signed it Joe Bernstein. I went over to the Bank Club, and Bill Graham and Jim McKay and Jack Sullivan were sitting in the counting room, counting. Walter Parman, the manager, took me in, and I handed the note to Bill Graham.

Bill Graham looked at it, handed it to McKay and says, "Is this Bernstein's signature?"

McKay says, "I don't know," and he handed it to Sullivan.

He says, "I don't know."

There was a phone setting on the desk, and I picked up the phone, called up Harrah's Club, told the operator, "Get Joe Bernstein on the phone."

He came to the phone and, "What the hell's the matter? What's the matter?"

And I said, "Will you tell these people to give me the ten thousand." I handed the phone to Sullivan.

He said, "What the hell's the matter? It's my goddamn money, give 'em the ten thousand!" He hung up.

So they gave me the ten thousand. I had the money in my pocket, turned around, and Walter Parman came in. I said, "I want to tell you people something." I said, "Had Walter Parman come over to Harrah's Club with a note from somebody to get ten thousand," I said, "he would have got ten thousand with no questions asked. And I said this, "This is not the way you're gonna get treated here." I thought it was very, very poor. So I thought it was real unethical and something that I wouldn't have

done in the same circumstances. That's the way the things went. There was a lot of competition between the different clubs at that time.

About a year after Harrah's Club opened, Fitzgerald came to town and opened the Nevada Club. And we were all enjoyin' a pretty good business. There was a man that used to work for me by the name of Emmett Shay who ran the Keno game for Fitzgerald. Well Fitzgerald was playin' lucky with the Keno game; and it was makin' quite a bit of money, and he thought maybe the percentage was too high on this Keno game. The percentage at that time I believe was about twenty—oh about twenty-five percent for the house. He changed his tickets and wrote up—put a big advertising campaign on—“Bonus Keno,” cut it down to fifteen percent. I looked and figured out the percentages that they were using on their Bonus Keno—I discovered that they were dealing it at between twelve and fifteen percent.

I went to Bill Harrah, and I said, “Bill, we can't compete with these people if we keep on going the way we are; and if we do the same thing they're doing, we're not going to make any money.” I said, “The wages are gonna be nine to ten percent, your taxes and so forth will be three or four percent, and your paper and equipment and supplies will be three or four more. We'll be losing money by dealing Keno this way.”

And he says, “Well I've handled these things before in Bingo,” and he says, “only one way to do this is to fight fire with fire.” He says, “Just cut that percentage down lower.

I says, “How low do you want it?”

He said, “Make it so that it's just even money—that it's no percentage against the player.

I said, “We're gonna lose a lot of money.”

He said, “Let me worry about that.” Of course this was after we'd been open a year, and they got a bankroll together just to begin with, and we were dealing with a very short bankroll.

I sat down and figured out a set of figures and the closest I could come was—to the percentage that I was tryin' to get to that—was the player had a half of one percent, the best of it. That's an unknown thing in a gambling house. But we didn't go out and do it on our own. I went to the Bank Club, and I went to the Palace Club and to Harolds Club and told them all what I was going to do. And they said well let us talk to Fitzgerald one more time. They called, and he wouldn't budge in what he was doing. So we all the next day had Bonus-Bonus Keno and dropped it down where the player was getting the best of it. Needless to say the business picked up.

The four of us, the Palace Club and the Bank Club, Harrah's and Harolds Club, were dealing pretty lucky in not getting hit by any big tickets. However, the Nevada Club got very unlucky and were losing a lot of money. They'd get hit with these big tickets, and it was really a sort of a catastrophe for them. They lost a lot of money in a very short time. Then they came back and decided we should get together, the Keno bosses and the bosses—Bill Harrah, “Pappy” Smith, Baldy West, and Jack Sullivan. These were the heavyweights of the gambling at that time, and Lincoln Fitzgerald.

We were in Pappy's office at Harolds Club discussing it, and I think there were only two underlings there, myself and Emmett Shay. Fitzgerald said well I think that twenty-eight—whatever the percentage was, was too much, and I would like to see it down to twenty-three percent or in that area. And we kind of worked it out and went on that basis. Everybody agreed, and we came to an agreement, and I think we put it at about twenty-three percent.

Emmett Shay had been my friend for quite a few years. He'd done me some favors up in Montana. I was very fond of him. And after he came down here and he got to be a boss

of the Keno, I was very unhappy because he didn't tell me when he made this change. I met him on the street.

I said, "If that had been I, I might have done that myself; but if I would have done it, why I would have told you about it."

He said, "Well you run your joint, and I'll run mine. so we weren't very friendly because of this.

We were having this meeting, and I said the rest of them didn't know anything about the game. Emmett had made a statement, and I said, "Now that—that's wrong." I said, "It's right here in black and white; this is what it is."

And he said, "You don't know black from white."

With that I jumped across Fitzgerald, Jack Sullivan, and Baldy West, and punched Emmett in the nose.

Old man Smith said, "Now boys, now boys, now boys." So it was quite a big fight for just a few minutes, and it stopped. I thought it was sort of an interesting thing that would happen.

Great rivalry between all the places at that time— the limits, what you do or what you couldn't do. But Harrah's Club seemed to come to the top and was doing better and better all the time. I was very proud of the place. This was in June we opened, and my position started to deteriorate [to that] of a bookkeeper; and at the end of the first year the books showed that above general expenses we had made a million and a half, the first year which was a lot of money in those days. And I figured five percent of that was seventy-five thousand, and I had just bought an apartment house for my mother and father with the money that I was going to get. So I went to talk to the bookkeeper about it, and he says well you've got thirteen thousand coming. I said well that's impossible—I got seventy-five thousand. He says after everything gets

amortized and this and that, he says this is all there is. That was my first time I'd ever heard the word amortized, and I—I don't— really don't care if I ever hear it again because all I could see was that I got amortized out of about sixty-two thousand dollars, as far as I was concerned. I just couldn't see it.

And in the meantime I had given some of my interest to the Faro Bank dealers, and I had given some of my interest to the Keno dealers. Now I couldn't pay these people, and this bugged me very much because [of] this amortization. And to make a long story short, it wasn't very long that I took the money and paid up one of the men that I had promised to pay, and Bill Harrah called me in, asked me about it. told him what I did.

He said, "You can't do that."

And I put my keys on the desk and said, "I quit."

Bill says, "Are you sure you're gonna do that?"

And I said, "Yes."

Tears came in his eyes, and he says, "Well, there wouldn't have been a Harrah's Club if it weren't for you." I believe that because I was the only one that did know the basics, but by then they had a good crew and Harrah's Club has gone from there.

I left with no rancor. We have our greatest respect for Mr. Harrah. I still haven't figured out whether I quit or got fired. I guess I'd have to say I was probably fired. I didn't do anything then for about six months. All I did was fish. I fished everyday in the Truckee River. I'm a good fisherman, had a lot of fun. But then I started to worry. I had the thirteen thousand and had to make a down payment on the apartment house; my folks had come down. So I was short of money.

WALDORF CLUB

My friend Howard Farris, who by the way is my partner now, and he and I worked together in the Palace Club before the war, and Howard is a varied character in many, many ways. He's always got a business deal of some kind, and he was dickering with a little fellow by the name of Nick Abelman. Nick Abelman was a famous old character from Tonopah, had been partners with Tex Rickard in Tonopah in a gambling house, and then he came to Reno and had the Riverside for years. And the Riverside in the old days was what we call a "nick joint." Anytime a big player come along, they always took advantage of them; and it was a sort of a—just a way of life at that time. All the small joints did not deal on the square at all times. A big player come along, they had somebody that could take the money.

Now Nick was not a dealer himself, but he was a very good little businessman. And nobody thought any worse or any less of anybody in those days, although now it's a heinous crime, and I really believe that too. Nick had nothing to do at this time.

Howard Farris came to me and said, "I got a chance to buy the Waldorf. Do you want a part of it?"

And I said, "I don't have any money."

He said, "Well if you can get twenty thousand dollars, we can buy it."

It looked like a good deal. This might be hard to believe, but I started at the Palace Club, walked around to the Bank Club through Harolds Club and back down in front of Harrah's, and within an hour and a half I had borrowed the twenty thousand dollars on the street. You better believe I borrowed from some pretty tough customers too, some people that wouldn't give anybody anything; but it always pleased me very much to know that—that people trusted me that much that I could go out and borrow that much money in that little time. There was no way I could have gone to the bank at that time; I had no collateral. So I was in business, went down and took over the Waldorf.

It was a mistake from the beginning. I had been around gambling houses all my life, but I had never been around food or bar

business, never tried to operate it; and I did know how to run one “21” game and a poker game and ten slot machines, but I was just used to bigger things. I was used to havin’ a lot of people coming through and going through and handling people when they’re there. You get a few local people, and you cater to them back and forth. And none of them would play very high; there wasn’t any chance to win any money, so it was a very, very bad situation for me.

In the meantime, Howard, my partner, was handling some big business deals overseas. He was buying whole islands of used war materials; the war was just over. And he had got a hold of quite a bit of money and bought up a couple shiploads of old iron—scrap iron tanks, tractors, and things; and they got into San Francisco bay, and a dock strike came, and they sat there for twelve or thirteen months, and the value went down, and Howard more or less got broke.

I had some interesting experiences in the Waldorf. It was a tough—tough place to work in. Everybody would come in, come on have a drink, and I got to drinkin’ coffee royales, and one day I woke up, and I thought my God, I’m an alcoholic. So needless to say I quit drinkin’ coffee royales. Only reason I drank was to get fifty cents in the till when I took a drink.

Had a man named Patterson come in, a gentleman. I’d known him quite awhile, and he liked me, and he was quite a wheel. I had a very small bankroll and was real worried about dealin’ any kind of a limit. I had ten dollars for the number limit; you could win three-fifty on one roll of the wheel, but anyway Mr. Patterson was very unlucky and got in five thousand dollars. Five thousand dollars was a lot of money to me then. I just couldn’t believe that that could happen—I could be that lucky to win that much money, and I needed it so bad to put the bankroll up and would take all

that pressure off of me. Mr. Patterson—about this time it was three o’clock in the morning, and the place was closed except the gambling.

He said, “Warren, bring me a check, and I’ll pay you.”

I brought the check. He started to write the check, fell backwards, had a heart attack. What little I knew about first aid sure came in good stead because I sure started workin’ on Mr. Patterson. I rubbed his wrists, and I didn’t give him artificial respiration, but I did everything else but, and got a drink of brandy in him and got him straightened out. And finally he came to and he signed the check. I didn’t ask him, but he signed the check. In the meantime I called an ambulance. I took him to the hospital. He didn’t die, but I’ll tell you that I was sure worried. Anyway, the check cleared, and I was in better shape than for a time.

In the meantime as it went along, it became more and more desperate, and as far as I was concerned I just couldn’t see how I could make any money in there. And finally Howard had borrowed some money from Nick Abelman who we talked about before. And so Nick took over his end of it. He come in; he says you stay as my partner, instead of half of it I’ll give you thirty percent, and I’ll remodel the place. Well Nick came in and put up a bankroll—I didn’t have to worry about that anymore—and spent about ten to fifteen thousand dollars remodeling the place. And when we opened it up, he made it look like the old Riverside and wanted to do it the same way. And we had no business.

And finally one day I said, “Nick, I’m gonna get out of here.

And he says, “You don’t have anything comm.’

I said, “I know that.” I probably did, but I walked out and went down to the Mapes Hotel and asked Bernie Einstoss for a job. And I’ve dealt with Bernie many, many times.

I'll go back to Harrah's Club, a story about Bernie. Bernie was about my age and about my size and about my coloring. Many times people mistook us, we being about the same size and being around the gambling business and so on and so forth. But anyway, I've known him from the old days in the Palace Club and in Harrah's Club. One time about a year after Harrah's Club was open, why he came in with Ruby Mathis and Sam Rubin. I believe Al Winters was with them. And we had raised the limit back up to the Craps—they were two hundred and four hundred I think—but anyway they were playin' Craps, and Bernie lost ten or fifteen thousand.

Bernie said, "Give me thirty thousand dollars worth of credit payable tomorrow.

So I said, "OK, Bernie."

While we were dealing, Howard Farris' brother was one of the dealers, and this was a real big game. The dice were workin' like trained pigs, as they do sometimes; they had one of those streaks I spoke about earlier, and it was all for the house. The dice were really choppin' the players up. There were three or four bets comin' off and on on a "come" bet every time, and Bernie had a bet of two and four on four, and the payoff was eight hundred and two hundred, a thousand dollars when the dealer set it out. And Bernie picked a thousand dollars up, his pay. In the meantime one of the dealers got mixed up and come back and paid it again. Well when he paid it again, Bernie grabbed the money, put it in a rack; so he now had in effect picked up a bet that wasn't his for a thousand dollars. And I started to say wait a minute, and I decided, no, I'm gonna leave it go because there'd be an argument I know. Once he got the money in the rack, it'd be pretty hard to win an argument. So anyway, in a few minutes the same thing happened again. Now he's in twenty thousand to thirty thousand dollars

worth of credit plus fifteen thousand—he's in thirty-five thousand, and I thought I don't want to mess the game up. So I let it go again.

To make a long story short, within a short time he'd used up the credit and said, "Thanks, Warren," and left. Next morning called me, he says come over to the Bonanza which was there across the alley, and I'll pay you. And I went over.

He said, "Boy kid," he says, "you got me pretty good."

I said, "Yeah, Bernie, the dice were choppin' real good."

"They sure were." He says, "I never got beat so fast in my life."

I said, "Well wasn't too bad, though; you got a couple of bets you didn't win." I said, "You might have got even on that two thousand you picked up."

He said, "What two thousand?"

I said, "The two thousand you picked up off the layout."

He said, "I didn't pick up two thousand."

I said, "Bernie."

"God damnit, did you see that?" [he said].

And I said, "Sure I saw it."

He says, "Why didn't you stop it?"

I said, "Well the dice were workin' so good, I knew I was gonna beat ya." He kind of laughed, and I think that really made a friend out of him for me because I don't think he ever forgot that.

So I went down and asked him for a job. He said, "Warren, I'm sorry. I don't have a job, but," he said, "Mapes needs a man."

He and Mapes were partners, but each hired their own bosses. So he says go see him, so I didn't know Charles, but I went up to see him. Howard Farris was workin' there, my old partner, so Howard spoke to Mapes for me, and I went up and talked to Charles. This was in 1949, I think in September. And Charles said, "Well come back and see me Tuesday."

I went back to see him, and he said, "Come here and sit down."

He said, "You're just the kind of man I want, Warren. I've been inquiring around, you've got a good knowledge, you know people. I'm glad to have you." He says, "And I heard a lot of good things about you, too, but," he said, "I did hear some bad things."

[I said] "You did?"

He said, "Yes."

I said, "Well Mr. Mapes, I've heard a lot of bad things about you."

He said, "What did you hear?"

I said, "Well, what did you hear about me?" That ended the conversation. Anyway I went to work.

MAPES, 1948-1954

Business was excellent, and I think I did a good job. I took care of the place and took care of everything. Bernie Einstoss was very good to me.

The Mapes was a real nice place to work. I worked for Charlie Mapes for five years, and he never questioned anything I did. And Einstoss never questioned anything I did; I was more or less on my own. And it was a fun job—a lot of high rolling play, a lot of exciting play, things that I like.

It was there I first met LaVere Redfield. We immediately called him “Mr. R.” Redfield was a very amazing man, and I, because he was a good customer, cultivated his friendship and became a very good friend. And I could see many good things in Mr. Redfield. He was tougher on a buck than anybody I ever saw, and I’ve never seen anybody that liked money as well as he did. But he was a very interesting man, and some of the things he did were absolutely fantastic.

He kept a hundred thousand dollars in the office and played against it. And like Zibarth who we talked about before, he was a system

player on the wheel. System players that have got unlimited money are hard to beat; you’ve got to beat them in the end, but sometimes it takes time. He was playing for—again the same amount as Zibarth, a hundred thousand dollars in the office he played against. He’d come in everyday, maybe miss one day a week, sit down for three or four hours and grind out a thousand and maybe two thousand dollars and maybe five hundred, but he did this everyday.

This went on for about thirty days, and one day Mapes, Einstoss and Frank Grannis, who was also a partner there and Frank was one of the old-timers, one of the dear men in our business. He was a gambler all his life. As a kid around the docks and everything, he was shootin’ dice, shootin’ tops, a little, thin, frail man, but well thought of, and he’s still alive and one of the good people in our business. He’s been retired for many years.

But they were discussing a play, and finally Bernie says, “Well we can’t beat this guy.” He says, “Cut him of f. Don’t give him that big limit anymore.”

The limit we were giving him was two hundred and fifty dollars to a number, five thousand on a two to one shot, and ten thousand on the even money, black and red, odd or even. This is an unbelievably high limit, but he very seldom ever got that high unless he was losing. So, he'd start out with a dollar, and really you'd be playing to five and ten dollars to a number, but when he got carried over, he'd go up—he could go up as high as two hundred and fifty dollars.

Bernie said, "Cut him off."

I said, "God, no, don't. Give me another chance. Don't cut him off now," I said. "Give me another week."

"Oh, you're not gonna beat that guy."

I said, "Bernie, we got to beat him."

He said, "All right, you—I'll give you another week."

"No," Frank Grannis said, "Bernie, Bernie, let him have it. Let him have another week."

So I think it was four days later, the thing turned, and I carried Mr. Redfield up where he was bettin' two hundred and fifty dollars to a number. He did this four or five times. Now his hundred thousand dollars was about gone; and as I remember it, he had probably about eleven thousand dollars bet. He had two hundred and fifty dollars on every number in the first column and every number in the third column, leaving the middle column empty. And he played that way so you had to beat him on a two to one shot to get the money, and he'll also bet five thousand in each column. Anyway, all his money was on the layout. The ball was rolling; he reached over to call the money on the inside column and push it over to the middle column. The dealer had given the ball a good hard roll, and it takes about a minute to drop. When I saw him do that, I looked up in the mirror so I could see the head of the wheel and the ball. And I could see where that—closed my eyes for just

a second and I knew that ball was going in number three. Now this has happened quite a few times to me in the gambling business; and so in a certain way, in certain conditions, I believe in ESP in the gambling business. This is very rare, but every time it's happened, it's happened in very crucial things—something it meant to me, and I knew ahead of time what was going to happen. I—I truly believe it, and I'm certainly not superstitious. I can't stand superstitious people in the gambling business, but I think this is different than superstition. I think ESP is knowing something that is going to happen, and I think that to the ordinary person it happens very rarely; but if it happens, we know that that's what happened. Anyway, the ball did go in number three, and Mr. Redfield was wiped out.

He was writing the numbers down as they came; and when that number three came, he took his sharp little pencil that I gave him when he started to play everyday and made the three. And when he come to the end of the three, he left the pencil on the table and set there with his head in his hand, never moved. He sat there for forty-five minutes. I tip-toed around him. As you can well imagine, there's not very much you can say to a man that's just lost a hundred thousand dollars in the way of condolences; and I'm sure you don't tell him a joke. So I walked around very carefully.

He finally got up and folded his little book, handed me back my pencil, and said, "Warren, I want to thank you very much for the grape juice."

I had brought him over a glass of grape juice when he first started to play. I think this shows that Mr. Redfield was a gentleman, even though he did like money. All you had to do was give him one little thing—the best of it, he had you because he—he was so sharp and so quick. But he again had a lot of class. He truly believed he could beat the wheel, and I

used to sit with a paper and pencil and tell him what the percentage was and tell him why he couldn't beat it. And the more I told him, the more convinced he became that he could—so by telling what the right way— what the right thing was didn't deter him one bit. He was a player 'til the time he died. He did some very strange things.

He come in one day with a check for forty-seven thousand, four hundred dollars and four cents, and said, "Warren, I want to leave twenty thousand here, and I want the rest in change. Would you cash the check for me?"

I said certainly. It was from Munsing Underwear. It was a dividend check. So I very carefully counted out twenty thousand and put it in an envelope for him and then gave him the rest of his change, twenty-seven thousand, four hundred dollars and four cents. We kept a lot of thousand dollar bills because that's the kind of currency he liked to deal in, and so I brought out twenty-seven thousand-dollar bills and four hundred-dollar bills, and counted them down very carefully.

Finally he said, "Twenty-seven thousand, right?"

"Yes, Sir. Twenty-seven thousand, four hundred, is that right, Mr. R.?"

"No. Sorry, that's not right."

I said, "Not—I'm sure now I put twenty thousand away, twenty thousand—twenty-seven thousand, four hundred."

He says, "Warren, you forgot the four cents."

I says, "My gosh, I forgot about it. I'm sorry, Sir." And I said, "You've got a little bit the best of it. We don't have any pennies in the office. I'll have to give you a nickel."

He says, "That's fine. I like a profit." He meant that truly.

One time, in this same period of time, he came in and lost part of his—he did this two or three times—played against his hundred

thousand dollars, and he lost a certain amount of it; and he wanted to take some down, and he had about a hundred and some thousand, but he wanted to pick up twenty thousand—whatever it was. And so he started to count the money, and I was counting it very carefully. And I get one, two, three, four, and he'd reach over and take one of the bills and set it up—and so I'd hesitate and then I'd go ahead.

He said, "Are you in a hurry, Warren?"

"No, Sir." I'd start to count more; he'd pick another bill out and set it off to the side. These were the bills that he was gonna take in change.

Finally he says, "Sure you're not in a hurry?"

I said, "No Sir, I got plenty of time." So this happened maybe five or six times with five or six different bills.

Finally he says, "You know, Warren, you don't mind if I put the dirty ones aside do you?" He said, "I like to have the nice, new bills." And he says, "Will Mr. Einstoss mind?"

I said, "Mr. Einstoss, if it's a thousand dollar bill, he don't care if they use them for toilet paper. He'll be glad to have them." So, but that was the kind of a man he was, that's the way he handled himself.

He was playing the wheel the time he got robbed. I think it was three hundred and some thousand in silver dollars. And he came in the next day after being robbed, and again intuition, whatever, I knew who robbed him. The guy who robbed him was a guy who was a porter, and another guy was an ex-fighter and there was a gal in on it. And I had just seen them on the perimeter of the thing. I knew that they were in on it. There was also a guy named "Buck" in on it. Buck had been picked up years ago for robbin' a stagecoach over around Ely; you can see that the chief was no chicken. But anyway I never saw Buck again. I don't know whatever happened to

him, but I think two or three of 'em did time for robbin' Redfield.

Mr. Redfield played with me wherever I went. Later on when I was at the Palace Club and later at the Club Cal-Neva, Mr. Redfield always came in and played and talked although his play, that changed quite a bit. When we first opened Cal-Neva, we didn't deal as high a place so I didn't get that much business from him, but he was still a tough player, but a nice guy to be around. I learned a lot about the business from him. He told me how he got started and a lot about his wife. He was very, very open with me. I think he was one of the most interesting men, as far as the gambling is concerned, in the state.

The state has had some great ones as far as gambling is concerned—I think Nick the Greek, Nate Jacobson who had opened up the Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas and King's Castle at Lake Tahoe, now out of business, was another high rolling player who I had dealt with many, many times, and will come to maybe again later on in the story. Nate probably lost as much gambling as anybody that ever came to the state, maybe— maybe more, although Redfield may have tied him. So now with all we've talked about, Carl Laemmle who said he lost two million dollars playin' Faro Bank; Nate Jacobson, I know who lost three or four million dollars shootin' Craps; Nick the Greek—uh—who God knows how much he lost—not all of his own money, but in the millions; and LaVere Redfield; and Fritz Zibarth, I think. Of course I don't know about the southern part of Nevada, but in the northern part of Nevada these people were the famous gamblers of all time, all of them friends of mine and all of them characters in their own right.

The five years I spent at the Mapes gave me a great deal of knowledge in the business that I wouldn't have had having that type of

people. I enjoyed the work, I enjoyed working for Charles Mapes. Charles was easy to work for, for me, and in all the time I worked for him he never criticized me or asked me why I had done anything. I got along with him very well.

The Mapes was an amazing place. You could stand there and feel that you didn't have any business at all, and somebody would come in and start to play and you'd wind up with a real good shift and maybe win a lot of money and sometimes lose. But it was an amazing place. There were many, many instances in the Mapes that probably wouldn't have happened anyplace else, but we accepted in a place like that we were dealin' with just a few people at the time.

We had an Italian from New York by the name of DeGiacomo who came out here and was like Mr. Redfield, absolutely certain that he could beat the Crap game by playin' system, a progressive system and also by the way he threw the dice. Mr. DeGiacomo had a decided Italian accent and talked mostly about opera and things like that. But he was a very haughty man, and he made all the help very angry with him. He was such a good player and had so much money that he was treated with kid gloves, of course, and he would play Craps everyday and win maybe five hundred or a thousand. And he was playin' progression in the field. He had an idea by rollin' the dice only a toot or two against the table that he had the best of it, and this was a fallacy which I was sure of. But it is a general practice of making people roll the dice the full length of the table.

One day Mr. DeGiacomo got to playin' and he got stuck, and I let him—nobody'd let him stand there and throw the dice six inches to a foot—and beat him out of about sixty-five thousand dollars. Mr. DeGiacomo was not what you'd call a good loser. He liked money very well, and he went back to the restaurant.

The maitre d' back there was also Italian, and his name was Dino.

I went back and I said, "Dino, take care of Mr. DeGiacomo." Just having lost sixty-five thousand, Mr. DeGiacomo was a little upset.

Dino said, "Mr. DeGiacomo, can I take your order?"

He said, "Bring me a glass of wine and leave me alone."

He set there, and I looked up and Mr. DeGiacomo had his hands on his head and over the glass of wine, and the tears were drippin' down his face into the wine.

I called Dino over, and I said, "Dino, what did you say? What did you say to Mr. DeGiacomo?"

I knew he hadn't said anything, but I was kidding him because he was pretty upset with him the way he treated him in the past.

I said, "How could you make that man cry? What did you do?"

He says, "I told him Caruso was dead." Things like that are the things that make the gambling business savory to me. I enjoyed every minute of it, still do.

One of the great things about the gambling business and I think it happened at the Mapes more than anyplace else, if somebody come in and was the sort of a person that Mr. DeGiacomo was, it was hard to get along with, I worked particularly hard to gain their confidence and show them I wasn't gonna do anything wrong to them and be so nice to them that they eventually would have to be nice to me. I do believe that I have had as much to do with changing over players and makin' good guys out of bad guys as anybody because I use patience, and I think that's one thing that made the gambling business interesting to me because these people that did like to be haughty and not treat people as well as probably they should, eventually if we treated them right, why they eventually had to

treat you right. And if they stayed and played which most of them did eventually, their losin' the money would pay for the way they acted to begin with.

But I think that most people that gamble, that's one of the things that has bugged me for a long time—you talk about compulsive gamblers; I think that one gambler out of ten thousand is a compulsive gambler. I think that most of them are just looking for something for nothing, and that's understandable. Everybody would like to have something for nothing, I suppose. However, the gambling changes more and more especially in the different places that I've worked, the Palace Club, Club Cal-Neva, Harrah's Club, where more and more all the time why it becomes where people are using it as a fun thing. It does not mean that they're gonna lose all their money. I have a figure that I use—it's off the top of my head, the average person in a gambling house loses three dollars an hour. With inflation in the last year, I've raised that to five dollars an hour. Well if you're in a gambling house and playing and having fun and you're average cost is five dollars an hour, I don't think that's absolutely expensive. There's many other things that cost more than five dollars an hour. You can see professional football games and many other things now. So, it is and I would like to see it be, an entertainment feature and not a life and death thing for somebody trying to win a jillion dollars. I think one of the great things that happens now is that you can win big sums of money for a small amount. I don't say that this is easy. The odds against us are so high that you would think they're non-existent.

However, big jackpots—these big wins on Keno and slots do happen. People have won as high as a quarter of a million. I've had jackpots for thirty or forty thousand, and now there's some that we are paying that pay as high as a

hundred and sixteen thousand. We have two jackpots that pay fifty thousand dollars and a thousand dollars a month for the rest of your life. These machines could be hit tomorrow, but if they reach their cycle and it was as it's supposed to be, it might be five years. Now this doesn't mean that you're taking in every nickel of that money or every dollar because of dollar machines; it simply means that that top prize is hard to get, but there are so many small prizes that it still is not a tight machine or a machine that's actually rippin' the people off. However, the people that gamble are bein' ripped off to some extent because there is that certain percentage that goes against them. That will never change, and the thing about it in the business is that percentages cannot be changed from the Crap games, one and forty-two hundredths on the front line and one and forty-one hundredths on the back line. It's been that way for over a hundred years. There's no way you can change that percentage, so it's not like sellin' hats in a haberdashery where you can raise your prices, We can't raise our prices, but we do try to get a dollar player to bet two dollars to make up for that deficit.

My stay at the Mapes amounted to five years. They had a lot of high class entertainment while I was there and dealt with a lot of these people. Most of them were pretty easy to deal with and some not. I can recall Phil Silvers, the television star of "Sergeant Bilko," was in the Sky Room of the Mapes as a top entertainer and comedian. The room was not suited for Mr. Silvers. His brand of humor did not go over there. Maybe it was just the local people that didn't think he was funny, but he absolutely died. He just was someone that people had never heard about. They thought it was a lousy show, so we were very short of business.

Bernie Einstoss ran the gambling for Mapes and was his partner in the gambling

business. Bernie bought his contract up, but he had to keep him two more days. He was supposed to be there three weeks, and he had about five days. When he came in, his manager left word that Phil Silvers was not to get any money because he was a compulsive gambler. Awhile ago I said there was one in ten thousand, he was one in the ten thousand. Phil loved to shoot Craps. So when he found out that his contract was bought up, he was gonna get the full price, and in those days I think for three weeks he might have been gettin' thirty thousand or thirty thousand five hundred, maybe twelve thousand five hundred a week.

It was a sizeable sum for those days; but whatever it was, he came to me and he said, "I want my money."

I said, "Well we're not supposed to give it to you, Mr. Silvers."

He says, "I don't care what you say. I want my money. The eagle flies today."

I said, "Phil, I am sorry the boss said not to give it to you." And he pestered me and pestered me, and finally I called Mr. Einstoss, and I said, "Silvers wants his money. He won't let me alone."

He said, "Well give it to him."

I gave him the money, and he started to play. It took about five or six hours and he got broke—to lose the whole amount, whatever it was, about thirty thousand dollars.

It was about five o'clock in the morning when he went broke. It was time to close the Sky Room. We closed it, and Silvers wouldn't leave the room. He just stood there. It was my job to count the money. So we took the money out of the Crap game, spread it on the Roulette wheel and started counting. About that time, I looked around, and the elevator was supposed to be closed to the public then, but the elevator operator who come on didn't know and here come two drunks. They came up to the top

floor, walked over and looked at this pile of money—maybe forty, fifty thousand stacked in neat piles on the wheel.

One guy nudged the other one; he says, “My God, what’re they doin’?”

Phil Silvers had tears in his eyes; he says, “They’re counting my money.” Well that was the end of Mr. Silvers.

We had a lot of very fine people. I recall very well when Sam Giancana, who was murdered awhile back by the Mafia, had left Chicago and came and stayed at the Mapes Hotel in Reno. His nickname was “Moonie.” Mr. Giancana was a mild acting man, tall, bald-headed, very quiet-spoken; and somebody told me who he was and he had two bodyguards. They were Italians, as was he. The bodyguards had to be six foot five and weighed two-fifty apiece. And Giancana would come up and shoot Craps, just play very quietly, a hundred dollars every roll of the dice on the back line and not say anything one way or the other. And he was passing time, not really gambling.

Well we had a guy that was a wild gambler that I had quite a few different run-ins with him. He was real outgoing when he got to gambling. He’d scream and holler and tell other people what to do. He was playing and bettin’ two or three hundred on the front line and taking the odds. Moonie was betting one hundred dollars on the back line, playing against each other.

The guy kept sayin’, “Oh come on, get on the front line with me; I’m hot.”

Moonie wouldn’t say anything, and finally this guy got more and more outspoken. I tried to hush him up, hush him up, keep still. Moonie’s reputation was such that I didn’t think he was gonna get very far pushin’ him around, and every time—the louder this guy got, the closer these two bodyguards would get. And I’m tryin’ to shut the guy up, tryin’

to straighten it out. Finally I had to get the guy and pull him over to the side and tell him you’re gonna have to shut up or else.

Giancana come over and said, “Warren, don’t worry about it; he don’t bother me.” It was kind of an amazing thing that to have a person—a soft-spoken person like Giancana; and that was at the time of the Kefauver investigation. And he was out here just keeping a low profile. And at that time the state had no rules about who could play and who couldn’t play. And his money was as good as anybody else’s.

Around that same time, Virginia Hill came in very frequently. She was supposed to be the gal that moved the money for the mob different places. And she was sponsored by a man by the name of Ike Epstein. I think all these people are dead now. Epstein was a quiet-spoken person. But they all gambled and all played, makes the Mapes sound like a haven for gangsters which it wasn’t really. These people behaved themselves while they were there, didn’t bother anybody, and spent their money like anybody else. And were certainly not trying to do anything in Reno to further the Mafia, whoever they represented.

In the business you meet all kinds of people and that’s one of the kinds. I’ve met a lot of those people. When they gamble and when they play, they’re probably a lot easier to deal with than a lot of people who have been regular businessmen.

I stayed at the Mapes for five years. There I met Walter “Bill” Pechart. Well Bill had been the man that took care of all the gambling in the Bay Area during the war. He had a partner by the name of Dave Kessel. Well they were both very personable men, and I had worked for them although I didn’t know them when I was workin’ for them when I was in the Marine Corps on weekends in El Cerrito—deal Craps, wheel and “21.” I knew them by

reputation and sight, but had never met them. When I met them they were very nice to me, and I enjoyed bein' with them. They did a lot of gambling, but especially Dave Kessel. Dave would kind of hold himself down, but one day he lost twenty thousand dollars.

"Well Warren, I'll go get the money. I'll pay you back next week."

So next week he brought me twenty thousand dollars in ten dollar bills. It was all wrapped in newspapers and smelt just like fresh dirt. And that's where they had been—buried someplace. I don't know if it was in Dave's backyard or where, but they were dug up to pay off the gambling debt. Dave was a very personable fellow—treated me nice.

In the meantime, Pechart was tryin' to get the Palace Club, and he said I want you to come over there; I'll give you an interest in it. By that time a report came out that Pechart couldn't get a license, he didn't get the Palace Club, but later on when I left the Mapes, he went to work and ran the gambling for Mapes after Bernie Einstoss left there.

PALACE CLUB, 1955-1962

About this time one of my partners, Howard Farris, who I have worked together with since 1937, we have been very close. Howard was a promoter; he was always getting something going. He and Harry Weitz and several other people gathered a group together and were tryin' to buy the Palace Club. They finally got this on, and I wound up with three percent of it. I didn't have the money to pay for the three percent, but Harry Weitz paid my end of it, and later on as we made money I paid him back. It was a great opportunity for me, and I moved over there from makin' maybe seventeen, eighteen thousand a year to about thirty-five or forty which in—I think this was in 1955—was a big step upward for me. We moved into the Palace Club, and I ran one shift, took care of one shift, ran the Keno and helped with the slots. We had quite a few partners in there, Harry Weitz, Frank Cohen, two Jewish fellows. We had Padilla, oh—the Hornstein brothers are two from San Francisco had a piece of it. But I think about ten or fifteen people and Howard Farris and myself, and Harry Weitz.

I can give you a little background on Harry Weitz. I'd met him down in San Francisco, dealt Craps with him for Pechart and a guy named Dave Kessel out at the 21 Club during the war, and he came up and was workin' at the Mapes when I went there. Harry was a very sharp little guy, a bookmaker, gambler all his life. We became very close friends.

I think that at the present time he's the only man in the gambling business that doesn't speak to me. Harry is a nice little fellow, however he's alienated himself from so many people. It's a shame because he's a knowledgeable, good man in many ways. He did me many favors and I feel that I learned a lot about the business from him. But on the other hand I think that he probably learned a lot from me. We worked along good together for about four or five years, and then things started to disintegrate. He was very good to me all the time I was in the Mapes, [and] another fella by the name of Dick Greenberg who was a very sharp guy. I found the Jewish fellas that I dealt with in the gambling business, the sharpest and as

reliable as anybody—Einstoss, Greenberg, Weitz, great people, great friends.

I've always hoped that someday I could get back and talk to him on a basis where he would know for sure that I felt strongly that I think he's a good man. Harry burnt himself up just because of the way he lived and the way he felt. His wife was a dear friend of mine, but unfortunately she was an alcoholic and this drove Harry to do things he probably wouldn't have done. She later died, but she was a very kind, sweet person except for the problem that she couldn't stay away from liquor.

His personal life shouldn't probably be brought into it, but tryin' to explain a little bit why he has been like he has been the last few years. I'm sure [there're] very few people he speaks to anymore; he just became bitter with the world, and it is a shame because the gambling business lost a good man just because of the way he felt about things. He should be a big boss in some place. Of course now Harry's too old, he's in his seventies, but fifteen years ago he should have went ahead and done real well. But Harry was a gambler; he loved to play, and I'm sure that he dissipated whatever money he had just by shooting craps. And it's a shame because he's—like I say, a good person.

The years at the Palace Club were again very, very fruitful as far as money and knowledge. I tried to learn as much as I could about slot machines, and at that time I took a hold of the slot machines as much as I could. We had a partner by the name of Iacometti who was a slot machine man. He was an old, old school man. He'd worked for Graham and McKay at the Bank Club and believed that everything should be so tight. And he really throttled the business; however, we took good care of customers and made money all the time we were there.

I was there eight years, I believe; and the Palace Club was a grind joint and I had something happen that was very unusual, I'm sure. When I went in the Palace Club I had three percent and went down, tried to get on the license. Now everybody [that] went on the license had to be OK'd by the Petricciani family in this way, and the head of the Petricciani family was Mrs. Petricciani and because her son wasn't in there, she didn't think that I should be on the license. So she refused to give permission for me to go on the license. I went to Carson City, and I believe at this time it was Governor Sawyer—or maybe it was before Sawyer. Anyway I wanted to explain this to the Gaming Commission the reason that my name wasn't on the license. And they more or less overlooked it, so I had the three percent without bein' on the license. I did that under three governors, and I believe that this has never been done before or since. When Laxalt became governor he was apprised of the thing that had gone along smoothly, and nothin' was ever said. However, I talked to Phil Hannifin about this a couple of years ago, and I said what would have happened if I'd come up with this deal when you were the head of the Control Board? He says, "You wouldn't have got a license." Phil's one of my best friends, but I'm sure I wouldn't have got a license if that'd been the case. However this was just something that Mrs. Petricciani didn't believe in. Because her son wasn't on the license, I shouldn't be. So it wasn't a big thing, and I never felt bad about it in any way.

At the time of the Palace Club I was tryin' to build Keno up, and I'm sure we built it up 'til we had about the best game in town. I worked hard all the time I was there. we tried to treat the customers good, and the place made money in spite of itself. One of

the problems was that there were so many partners and they were all at loggerheads.

At that same time, the same partners and a few extra ones went up to the Lake [Tahoe] and bought a place and built a place called Tahoe Plaza. We built it up and started it, I think with twenty partners, and this finally got to the point that it wouldn't work. We had it for two years, I believe, and it was really messed up; all the different partners, everything that had happened, it wasn't very much of a success, although it was a great location. I never went up there. Several of my partners were running up there, but it just wasn't doing any good.

We had a meeting and decided to sell it. Harrah's was gonna buy it, and we were gonna sell it. I forget the exact price, but they'd had an offer. And I said well you can sell your end of it for that price, but I won't sell mine; and I called up Harrah's Club and got an additional five hundred thousand dollars. So we sold it that May. It probably was a good thing. I got about between twenty and thirty thousand dollars out of the deal. And that money was the money I used to buy into Club Cal-Neva where I am now.

The dominating partners were Harry Weitz, Louie Iacometti, Louie Rosasco, my old partner Howard Farris. Howard and I grew up about the same way in the gambling business and have pretty much the same backgrounds. He came out of Wyoming; I came out of Montana. Howard had a little more education than I, and although we differ in many, many ways, our lives have been pretty parallel. We've remained good friends; we've had a lot of differences in how business should be handled. However, Howard is one of the fine people in the business and knows it well. He's older now, and Howard has been a builder. He's always tryin' to get something new and

different, and because of this trying he's helped me several times. We've had failures and successes; right now he is my partner in the Cal-Neva which is a great success. I'm sure that had he and I run the Palace Club together it would have been much better than it was. However, it was a good place and it was very good to me. I made enough money there to keep on going and get bigger and better I hope. It was a great experience because of the different partners and the way things were handled, not at all like a gambling house should be. But it just was one of those things that that's the way it had to be the way it was.

My other partners in there were very unknowledgeable about the business. Except for Howard Farris and Harry Weitz, the rest of them have very little experience if any with the exception of Jack Guffy, and Jack Guffy had worked at the Bank Club for many years. And Jack was pretty knowledgeable, but Jack retired after he left the Palace Club, is no longer interested in the business. But Jack was a hard worker and did have knowledge of the business.

We were in there eight years and made some money every year. In fact, quite a bit as far as I was concerned, probably put me up into about a thirty-five or forty thousand dollars a year bracket. And eighteen years ago, nineteen years ago, twenty years ago, this was good money, and I lived well and enjoyed it. I spent a lot of time—at that time I had more time and learned to enjoy myself more, did a lot of hunting and a lot of fishing, and along with the work; but it was a lot of fun to work at the Palace Club. I'm sure that my knowledge took a hold there. I think I knew the games and the Keno well before I went in there, but I became very interested in slot machines. And the partner that was running slot machines was an old-timer that worked for

Graham and McKay, and they believed that those slot machines should be so tight, and consequently we never came anywhere near the potential that they would have reached if I had been able to do some of the things I wanted to do. But because I couldn't do them, I became more interested and studied more and more what a slot machine could do and what I thought it could do as far as having a loose percentage for the player. That is essential, and everybody in the business that is doing any good at all now has learned that.

We had many ups and downs at the Palace Club, but it was strictly a grind joint, made money every year. One of the things that pleased me at the Palace Club was I was able to handle a lot of young people and put them to work. At this time it was a little tougher to get jobs, and the people that worked for me at that time have now gone on to bigger and better things. It's amazing what some of these young men have done, and they're not young men anymore. Phil Hannifin was one of them, is now president of the Summa Corporation. Noel Manoukian was another who is now supreme court judge in Nevada; and a boy named Jacobson who went to work on the space program, became a big man in it. Another man that went ahead is Roger Ferguson who is now an M.D., but a research M.D. for the University of Utah, one of the bright people in, I believe, cancer research. Some of the others were Walt Ryals who went ahead and is now working for the newspaper, the Gannett Newspapers now in Visalia, [California]; Ron Einstoss, who passed away, was an editor of the local paper here; Dave Mathis, now a lawyer; Joe Bliss, who still works for me, but going to the University at that time and was the collegiate world champion lightweight fighter, an Indian boy who is one of my top men in the Keno now and with his college education, why he's

been a great help to me. Ad Tolen, my present partner, was one of the pit bosses in there, and knowing him was another thing that helped me a lot at that time. He was a very good man in the business, broke in when he was real young, has been in it close to fifty years, and broke in down in Mexico and on the—and in Los Angeles, came up here, went to work in the '30s and was a real well-thought of man in the business. Ad, as we'll see later, went with me to the Cal-Neva, and at the wish of Howard Farris and I, still owns a small portion; he still is a partner and doing well in the Cal-Neva.

We had a lot of non-working partners, the Hornstein brothers from San Francisco and their brother-in-law, and a man named Frank Cohen who passed away while we were in there, all men that couldn't contribute much to the business because they hadn't been in it always, but they did put up their money. It was sort of weird the way we acquired the Palace Club. Several people were trying to get it, and I just kind of rode on everybody's coattails; and when they put the deal together I wound up with three percent of it. As we worked in there, it went along good at a very even basis, nothing spectacular, but it was well thought of, and we had a lot of good people working there.

The Palace Club, I suppose I spent from '36 to '42, six years, and then eight years; fourteen years of my gambling experience was in the Palace Club, so it remains the great part of my education. I would have to say from the time I first went to work there and when I left, why my education was far from complete, but a good portion of it took place on that corner.

CLUB CAL-NEVA, 1962-PRESENT

When I left there it was under sort of strange circumstances. I sold my three percent out, and as did Howard Farris. And we left together and came into Club Cal-Neva. That I believe was 1962. It was, I believe, forget exactly what time of the year it was, but when I left the Palace Club and knew I was goin' to the Club Cal-Neva, it had been closed for two years and was really run-down. I put on a pair of over-alls and went to work cleaning it up with a crew, and supervised the cleaning it up and changing it around. I worked about a month and a half or two months doing this and getting it in shape to reopen it. When it reopened, it was in the first of April, and going into it the partners were Jack Douglass; Leon Nightingale; Doug Busey, an attorney; Howard Farris; Ad Tolen; and John Cavanaugh. It was distributed up, I started out with ten percent. It was two thousand dollars a point, so my end of it was twenty thousand dollars. Later we had some extra stock. Doug Busey sold out his stock, and I wound up with fourteen and twenty-nine hundredths percent of it. Later on I sold

two and twenty-nine hundredths to my son, kept twelve for myself.

The Cal-Neva was more or less a success from the start. All the partners were in working everyday and working hard. Howard Farris, myself, and Ad Tolen took care of the gambling end of it. And Leon Nightingale and Douglass were active in the business end of it, and the bar and the restaurant. I would probably have to say that that twenty thousand dollars was one of the greatest parlays that's ever been made as far as I'm concerned from my own personal standpoint—my own personal viewpoint. I would hesitate to say how much it's worth now, or how much I have taken out of it from the twenty thousand original dollars that was put in it.

However, along with the money that was taken out, there was a lot of hard work and a lot of new ideas that were put into it to make it the success that it is. I believe now that it's the best gambling house in the state of Nevada. I think it makes more money per square foot than anyplace in the state of Nevada. That's a pretty big statement and a broad one, but

I believe it to be true. And I believe it's due to—the transition that has been made in the gambling business, and the fact that Cal-Neva was able to make that transition into the new deal as far as slot machines, Keno, and the new idea on the games.

I think the greatest thing we've had is our help. I went in there and put a crew together—in the important parts. One of the first men to go to work for me was a man by the name of Clyde Bittner. Clyde was from Montana, came down to Reno with me in 1936. He had worked quite a few years at Harrah's Club as a pit boss, came to work over there as a shift manager. Clyde was an energetic little guy, very sharp, very good to people. I think that he helped the place immeasurably—he was a very good man. Unfortunately, Clyde passed away I believe in 1969. It was just thirty years before that that he and I had come down from Montana, and I took him back to Montana on the same day we'd come, the twenty-ninth of April, and buried him in our hometown of Great Falls, Montana. Clyde I'm sure helped immeasurably to make the club a success.

Hughie Connolly, who passed away last Christmas, came to work. Hugh was one of the great people in the business. I could write a whole book about Hughie Connolly. He's one of my dearest friends and one of the best people in the business I've ever encountered. Hughie was not the brightest guy in the world as far as learning fast how to deal the games, but once he learned he knew them well. His greatest asset was his ability to get along with people that worked for him and to take care of the people that were players.

The help liked him. He was pretty tough on 'em. He'd chew somebody out real good and then go back an hour later and tell 'em why, explain it to 'em. The people really liked that. His death left a great hole in the management of the club, an outstanding man. One of the

great things that he did was to teach people how to treat people, and all the young bosses at work really—*really* know how to go out and say hello and what to do and how to handle people when they're gambling, and this is not an easy thing to do. When people are gambling they're not as easy to get along with as they are especially if they're losing; but if you can handle those kind of people, then you've done a good job.

I think he had a great deal to do with the success of Club Cal-Neva because he worked the graveyard shift, but we always had the best graveyard in town. And it was mainly because when the people came in, whether they were rock sober, no matter who they were, they were well treated as long as they behaved themselves.

Hughie was a great asset to us, and is greatly missed. His background with me goes back a long ways. He went to work for me when he was nineteen years old before the war, I believe in '38 or '39. He was about nineteen; I know he wasn't twenty-one yet. He was pretty young. He's about five years younger than I am. I was probably twenty-three at the time or twenty-four, and he went to work for me as a skill.

Hughie, to go on a little bit further about him, adopted three children, [he] and his wife. He's married to a nice girl who survived him. And he was well-known all through the state of Montana. He was a fighter as a young man, and one of the best amateur fighters I have ever seen. All through the Marine Corps as much as I saw of him, which was little because we got split up after we first went in, but Hughie was an outstanding person. I probably think that he had as many medals and did as many things during the war in the South Pacific fighting the Japanese as anybody. He was an army by himself; he could clean out their caves; he was a fearless man. All the

years I know him he never did tell me of those experiences in the Marine Corps, but I heard that from other people. So he was a very, very shy man. He wasn't one to blow his own horn. Enough of Hughie Connolly.

He and a young man by the name of Howard Keogh came to Reno together, and Howard was several years younger than Hughie. So between the two of them, one was seventeen and one was nineteen, maybe twenty, but they were both underage. In those days it didn't make that much difference. They both went to work for me; they both remained my lifelong friends. Howard Keogh is now a graveyard manager in the Union Plaza Hotel in Las Vegas and doing very well. Howard, Hugh, and I joined the Marine Corps together in 1942.

The Cal-Neva Club was a success from the start. It was a combination of things, I believe. The partners had something to do with it. I think the location was good, and it took off you might say almost at once. We opened the first of April, and the first year we were open the profit amounted to about two hundred and ten thousand which was more than actually I believe we expected at that time. The next year we went into a bus program real strong. It was something that I didn't think too much of at the time. At the end of the year, we quit five hundred dollars winner by having buses. We were getting too many of them on Saturday, and it was a mess. It really didn't amount to much, but I believe now after looking back on it that we treated the people that came in on those buses so well, that they're still our customers. Now that's sixteen years ago, so I—I figure it probably was a good thing.

The next year the club took off, was very successful. We probably won about five hundred thousand which looked very good at that time. The club has gone on from there; it's

been in here sixteen years, and I believe has grown into probably as good a club as there is in the state of Nevada. I think it makes as much or more money per square foot than any casino in the state. I think this is due to management; I think it's due to location, and most of all I think it's due a lot of it to our help. The partners now have become not as involved as they were, but we've had some very good help.

One of our top men when we first opened was Clyde Bittner. Another man that I attribute a lot of our success to was Johnny Howell. Johnny was in the Marine Corps with me. He was from Salt Lake City, and he said that he didn't want to go back to Salt Lake and did I think I could get him a job. So when Harrah's Club opened in 1946 I called Johnny in Salt Lake and he came down and went to work the day it opened. He worked there until he came over to go to work for me. John Howell's still a shift manager, and he likewise is a very good man. He's always here. And an amazing thing, he has two sons that are working for me now and both of them are pit bosses. One of them is only twenty-two, Scott, and the other one is twenty-five. This is an amazing thing to make young men bosses like this, but they're both doing excellent. And something that I never realized you could do, but it's a very good thing to do in this business to break these people in and make them bosses if they have the knowledge and have the ambition—these boys do.

Another man that's done a good job for us and been a good man through the years is Ernie Hastings. Ernie is a local boy, and been around Reno all his life and still works for us and is a top-notch man.

I've got a lot of young men in the organization that have really made it go. Another one is now assistant manager, is a Basque boy that went to work for us as

a cashier and learned the games and now is assistant manager out of Mountain City, graduated from the University, an ex-Marine pilot and very capable. His name is Dick Urriale.

Our top man John Brevick is an amazing young man. John is now not quite forty. He has been workin' for us for seventeen years. He started out as a Keno dealer. As a Keno dealer he was doin' a good job.

But he came to me one day and said, "Would it be all right with you Mr. Nelson if I learned how to tend bar?"

I said, "Certainly, on your own time go ahead.

So in about two or three months the head bartender come over and said that young man's doing real good. He said, "I wonder if I could take him as a bartender?"

I said, "If that's what he wants to do, fine."

The next day Brevick come back and said, "No, I didn't want to be a bartender." He said, "What I'd really like to do is learn how to deal Craps."

So I said, "Go ahead."

Now in about three months he came back, and he said, "Well I've been dealin' Craps. I would like to learn Roulette."

I said, "John, can you deal Craps?"

And he said, "I think so."

There happened to be a pretty good game going; I said, "Well let's get in and see."

So I got in and fancying myself as a pretty fair dealer I looked up and in about two minutes I could see he was doing better than I. So I said go ahead and learn Roulette. He went ahead, learned Roulette, learned "21," all the other games, and before long I think in probably 1969 we bought a place up at Lake Tahoe called Cal-Neva Lodge. We bought it from Frank Sinatra and his people, and built a two hundred room hotel on it. And John went up there as a shift manager.

To continue with John's story, he came to me one day and said, "Just finished a course in horseshoeing up at the University." He says, "You got some horses, could I come out and shoe some for you?"

I thought that was an amazing thing that somebody that far along the business would learn how to shoe horses. Well within a month or two I found out he was goin' to real estate school and passed real estate school and became a real estate salesman in his off time, and within three months he got his broker's license. This is the kind of people that we're finding in the business, the kind of people that make it go. Fantastic guy.

Club Cal-Neva now has a thousand people working, and I could go on and on about the people that have helped make it a success. There are indeed many. Some of the younger people that have come into the business are helping. My son, now thirty-one years old, has taken hold and is doing real well. My head Keno man, Bob Ireland, has worked for me since he's twenty-one years old, about twenty-five years, and is a top-notch young man, quiet, unassuming, know his business and does a good job.

I have Pat Iacometti working who is probably the premier Keno man. He is very, very knowledgeable. Pat was born in Reno and sent to Italy as a boy to be educated; he has a little struggle with speech, but one of the brightest people I've ever known. It's a pleasure to have him around.

A young man by the name of Stan Tenerowicz is now the assistant slot machine manager. I knew him when he was probably a freshman or sophomore in high school, a friend of my son, came to work for us and has become a top-notch man in his field, real—real high-class man and really has learned the business and is learning everyday. Willie Stromer, our top slot machine man,

is an expert, one of the best I think in the slot machine field. He's a great electronics man and also a great figure man; that's very important in our business, and he is excellent in what he does.

Again to go back to some of the college boys. Joe Bliss was running one shift of the Keno for me, and he was an Indian boy, a Paiute Indian who graduated from the University and worked all the time he was going to school and elected to stay in the gambling business, and I'm very happy he did because he does a good job. There's probably no end to personnel in a place like this. It goes on and on.

Harry Hall who came to Reno with me in 1936, retired two years ago; a top-notch man in the Keno, we were together for over forty years. Hated to lose him, but nobody can work forever.

Another top-notch man, Peck Holly, retired, and he worked for me for twenty-five or thirty years. He's another Montana boy.

A great friend and a great man, Harry Montague has retired. Harry and I worked together from 1937 off and on until his retirement about a year ago. He had a slight heart attack and thought he'd better quit. Harry was a very unique man, probably as honest a man as you could ever find to watch your money, but unfortunately he hated to lose. This probably, the fact that he hated to lose, held him back a lot because he just could not treat the players right that were winning. But everybody seemed to understand him, and he got away with it. I hated to lose him because he was such a watchdog and did take such good care of the business. However, with so many people working, a thousand in here, then it's awful hard for all of them to understand that Harry meant no harm when he got mad because they lost. However, he's one of the old-timers that really knew the

business and an old-timer that you could really depend upon.

I would suppose that off and on the people who have worked for me in different places, not one or two, but many in the dozens have worked with me and for me for from ten to forty—as high as forty-five years. This makes you pretty close to these people. One of the bad things about growing large—we now have a thousand people working—is that you don't know the people like you used to. I used to pride myself on knowing everybody, their first name, their wife's name, their kid's name, what their dog's name was, and what grade their kids were in. It's impossible to do, and I've divorced myself from that because I found out I couldn't do it; my memory not being as good as it used to be has something to do with it.

Club Cal-Neva just got better and is getting better all the time. It's an amazing business. My investment in here was twenty thousand dollars when it opened. This would probably go down as one of the great parlays of all time. I'm not going to try to estimate my net worth, but most of it has come from Club Cal-Neva. And to give an example I suppose my income in 1977 will be close to four hundred thousand; that's for one year. Being in the seventy percent bracket for income tax doesn't show too much profit, although I'm not kiddin' that this is a fantastic business.

CIVIC ACTIVITIES, EXPERIENCES WITH INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE, GAMING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

About four or five years after I was in Club Cal-Neva, something happened in the town and the city that I didn't approve of, and I made a statement.

I said, "What's the matter with those people?" I believe it was in the downtown association.

Somebody says, "Well, if you think they're doin' wrong, why don't you do something about it? Why don't you join it?"

I did. And since then the city government, the different associations in Reno have taken a lot of my time. I've never been sorry. I really went into it full bore. I went into the Chamber of Commerce, the Gaming Association, the Rodeo Association. I've been affiliated with just about everything that has anything to do with downtown Reno or particularly anything to do with the gambling business. That has been my main thrust is to try to do something to make the gambling business a little better thing.

One of the things that I think we're gradually doing is improving the image of the business. I believe that our business is going to

get bigger, and I think it's going to get better. I don't condone gambling. I don't say it's the greatest thing in the world, but the way it's conducted in the state of Nevada is the way it should be conducted. And I think that since the beginning of time that gambling has been here, since a soldier shot Craps for Christ's clothes, so it's here to stay. I believe now and I think that we're all trying to do the same thing, that gambling is now to a point where we're trying to make it a pure entertainment thing instead of something where somebody gets wide-eyed and rambunctious trying to win a lot of money or lose a lot of money. We're changing that, we're trying to make it a form of entertainment. About four or five—maybe ten years ago, I had—made a rough estimate that it cost the average person three dollars an hour to stay in a gambling house, whatever they did, if they played a dollar on the "21" or a nickel slot machine, whatever, because the percentage would keep them there long enough, so it would cost them about three dollars an hour. I think with inflation and everything it would be a little different now,

probably five dollars an hour, but I do believe that with—if you used good judgement and wanted to be entertained with a chance of making a winning of some kind, why that's about what it would cost. I think that when you're talkin' about five dollars an hour the way entertainment is nowadays, I think that that is a very, not a very expensive thing. Let me stop a minute—I'll answer this phone.

I believe in 1964, I was appointed in a group of people that went back to Washington, D.C. to discuss the Keno game with the IRS. Keno bein' my forte. We went back with the group, a large group of all the Keno people in the state because it was very important to us at that time. The governor, both senators and [in] the House of Representatives was Walter Baring at that time, and I believe Bible and Cannon; and the governor was Laxalt, head of the power company and the head of the telephone company from both the north and the south, presidents of half a dozen banks. A contingency of about probably thirty or forty people made a good showing and appeared back there. And at that time Mortimer Kaplan was the head of the IRS. What they were trying to do was put a ten percent tax on Keno which would have certainly ruined the game. We fought that off, but as always when you fight the IRS, you can never win the war. You lose battles, and they're always pickin' at you—you lose something every time you talk to them. However, we did keep the game on a pretty even keel and what went by we managed to survive. Since then I have met with Sheldon Cohen, I met with Johnny Walters and most recently Jerry Kurtz, one, two, three, four different IRS commissioners. I found all of them knowledgeable, people you could explain things to, much more than you could down on our level on the state. In the state they seem to understand us less than they did at the national level. However,

we never did really win any battles. Sheldon Cohen, I believe, was one of the smartest people I've ever come in contact with. I appeared before the IRS commissioner and his lawyers and the people interested, and got up to talk about Keno, started at nine o'clock, by twelve o'clock I was still talking. I asked Mr. Cohen if I could stop.

He said, "No, let's finish this; I want to hear it."

I talked another hour 'til one o'clock, and when we got done he had a good basic understanding of Keno. And we did come out of it with a whole skin, although we did get scraped a little bit coming out, which we always do. Later on we appeared before Johnny Walters and before—the latest one—Jerry Kurtz.

Our problems are large ones. They're distinct; they're hard to understand, some of the things that happen. We always believe we are right, but they always tell us we're wrong. The problem is that they don't understand, and we can't get anybody out here to look at us and find out that we are good, legitimate people in doing things the way they should be done, in our opinion.

The last man we talked to was Jerry Kurtz. The IRS is very intent upon taxing all gambling winnings. They at present are taxing any Keno ticket over fifteen hundred and any slot machine winning over twelve hundred. When you stop to think how fast the people can put money in the slot machine or how fast they can play Keno, this is very unfair. A man playin' the dollar slot machine could put in twelve dollars a minute, seven hundred and twenty dollars an hour, win a twelve hundred dollar jackpot, be six hundred dollars loser and be expected to pay. However, we have been able to make out forms to show that the people have to the best of our knowledge, the probability as to how much money they

have lost, but in a big gambling house this is very hard to do. We are doing the best we can. We feel that they now have the idea that they should tax anybody that wins money at a Crap table or "21" table when somebody bets five hundred dollars and wins three hands, and then coming back three hours later and losing five hands, you can imagine what they're gonna say if you try to collect on that first fifteen hundred they win.

In fact not long ago, we had a man from Canada who hit a twenty-two hundred dollar Keno ticket, was eight thousand dollars loser playin' the wheel, and tryin' to explain to him that we had to take fifteen percent of that twenty-two hundred because he was from Canada, which is another rule of the IRS. Anybody from a foreign country, you have to take the money, collect for the United States government. We believe this is wrong; we've tried to fight it; we've tried to show 'em where they're wrong and where collecting it is gonna cost them a lot more money than it would otherwise because the people that don't play would cut our income down, that's where the money to the government comes from is people like myself in the seventy percent bracket. The business generates so much business now; I believe last year ninety-four million went into the general fund on the gambling business. The gambling business gets tougher and tougher to make a living in all the time. Again, I'm not crying poor wolf because it is a good business, but we have so many rules, so many regulations.

In conjunction with what I've been doing, about seven years ago, Governor O'Callaghan appointed me to the Gaming Policy Board. I have had a great rapport with our governor, and he has listened to me on many, many things concerned with gaming. We certainly don't always agree and probably never will. He's as strong willed as I am, and I believe that

I know more about the business, what's good for it than he does, but I don't always get my way. But that's neither here nor there. We still argue about it and see what happens.

There have been many meetings that I have attended; and through the years one of the things that helped me I believe now, I believe that I have probably known more people in the business from all levels than probably anybody in the state of Nevada. I'm on speaking terms and am friendly with Baron Hilton, with my old friend Dick Graves from the Sparks Nugget, with Johnny Ascuaga, with Harvey Gross. Of course I worked for Bill Harrah, all the people down in Las Vegas, Jackie Gaughin one of the top people in our business, Sam Boyd who is a partner with me in the California Hotel down there, one of the premier people in our business who has been in it as long as I have. And he is also one of the old-timers that has made the change from the old days and to the computers and the young people that are now taking over. He has a son, Bill, who is a lawyer the same as my son, is very knowledgeable about the gambling business. Some day he'll probably be running that business. I own a small piece of the California Hotel down there; I'm on the board of directors and feel that I'm able to help them in many ways at our monthly meetings.

One of the great things that happens is the change of ideas and that goes on back and forth between them and myself. Jackie Gaughin, the first of every month calls me and says well what did you do on the slots? We go back and forth, and between us this also goes on with Sam Boyd and Frank Scott who's now at the Union Plaza. These people by comparing our different places and what's going on, I'm sure that it's helped all of us. I think that the more communication that you get between people that the better off you are. This is a hard thing to do because

so many people want to hide what they're making, what they're doing. I have never felt that way; I always believe that in everything I've done I'm pretty proud of and usually I can say, "Well I'm doin' better than you," and that gives you a good feeling, although it does sound like you're pretty braggadocio. And I guess if you've got something to brag about, that isn't too bad.

I'm back and forth from Las Vegas so much that these things always kind of work out and see what happens. To get back to Club Cal-Neva, I guess four years after we came in here, we got together and bought Club Cal-Neva up at the Lake, paid, as I remember, a million, two to Sinatra, spent four million dollars building a hotel, kept it for two years and sold it for a profit of two and a half million. It was quite a place, but it was just too much work. Two places to run were too much for us, and I for one, was driving back and forth so many times that I was really glad to get out of there. It was pretty nice to have that capital gain money for my twelve percent or fourteen percent that time of the two and a half million. I think we did a real good job at the Club Cal-Neva at the Lake. In fact the last three months we had it, the club made a million dollars.

We turned it over to Ohio Investment Company who bought from us, and I understand they lost a million and a half or a million dollars in the first three months they had it. So this gives you a little insight of management in the gambling business. They figure it would be the same way as running a bank or anything else. I think that you have to have topnotch people to make a gambling house go. I think that management is one of the main things. However, location, many things have a lot to do with it.

I would think the Club Cal-Neva because of its unique position is probably as well

situated as most with parking and the other clubs around it. And we have remodeled three times, each time a major piece of business. The first time we took two stores next door to us and doubled the size of the downstairs Keno, and in doubling the size of the downstairs casino, I'm sure that we more than doubled our income. Three or four years later we took over the Western Union behind us and that made us a third again as big, and then we more than doubled our business again. Just a year ago in April, we added the upstairs, put a restaurant up there and moved it up. And I believe that that's doubled our business. There doesn't seem to be any end of it, and I certainly hope there isn't. We are now contemplating going across the alley clear to Virginia Street and doubling the size of the club again.

In the meantime we have also started to build a new hotel of two hundred rooms called the Comstock. It's two blocks up Second Street. It will have a casino about the size of the downstairs Club Cal-Neva. This business is growing so fast, so big, it's pretty hard to keep up with.

To tell all the stories about Club Cal-Neva would certainly take a lot of time, but it has been very satisfying to be part of it. I believe that my end in running the gambling and taking care of the Keno and helping with the slots has contributed a great deal to it. I believe now that I've learned as much about slot machines as anybody, and I think that my ideas on big jackpots and thinking big and learning percentages is a great deal to do with the success of the club. But I had a lot of help from Ad Tolen, my partner. He's an old-timer, been around a long time. He's very conservative; that probably helps me because I'm inclined to go off onto a tangent at times. However, the rest of my partners see that I don't.

One of my partners, Howard Farris, and I have been partners—I probably spoke of him before—but have been partners since 1937. We were in the Waldorf together, then the Palace together and in the Mapes together, and now in the Cal-Neva. Howard's health is not good; and he doesn't spend as much time as he used to. However, he's very knowledgeable in our business and in the early days was a lot of help. Howard is an aggressive person, always lookin' for a deal. He's had some good ones, and he's had some bad ones. A few times he scared me to death because usually I'm with him, and some of them have been good, some bad. However, right now I don't think either one of us can kick about what's happening in Club Cal-Neva.

We'll go back a little bit to my involvement in the community. I've had many honors placed upon me because of the work I've done, and it makes me feel good. I've been closely connected with the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the Denver Jewish Hospital, the United Way. These different things. They all take time; I have tried to cut down and not be as active in these things as I used to be, but it's pretty hard to do. But I have cut down some.

One of my greatest projects has been the Gaining Association. I was the president of it for five years, and I believe that that has been a real good thing for the business. We won't get everybody in the gambling, in the area that belong to it, but most the people do. It's been run very fairly. It's as good for the little person as it is for the big clubs; and although we've had our problems and ups and downs with it, I believe that something like that's very essential for the business. I think that getting together and talking your problems over, and getting together and putting the money together to fight the different things you have to fight, has a lot to do with the success of our business.

Now we have more and more government people in it all the time, more state, more county, more restrictions, but I guess this is just the nature of the beast. I suppose everybody does. I've always been against new regulations in our business because I think that we know more about regulating than the state does or the federal government. We fight off some of it, but some of it comes in and then sticks; it's not something you can't live with, but we're buried under tons of paper and it does make it difficult and costs a lot more money to operate. Of course everybody wants to see what's going on, and I think basically the state does a very good job. But I think the state is really handicapped. The people they hire, they've had some topnotch, real good men, but then with the wages the state pays, they can't attract real top-notch men. This is something I would like to see changed and will try whatever I can do to increase it. One of the things that's been very gratifying is being able to know intimately and be close to the top people in the state of Nevada. I consider Howard Cannon a very dear friend.

All the outside activities we were talkin' about take a lot of time, but they certainly are important. Somebody has to do it. It'd be done more and more. Apparently in the industry you have to kind of move along the way other businesses do. And it's pretty tough to fight when you have different rules and regulations all the time, but if you don't participate then you can't fight them. So participation is the word, and I believe truly that participation of some few people in the business have really helped. I think that it helps better with the government in all facets of the government. I think it's important to know your Senator, your representative, your governor; and I have been able to become well acquainted with all of these people and able to converse with them and tell them my problems; and ninety-nine

percent of the time, they listen and try to help as much as they can. The business becomes more complex everyday, becomes bigger everyday, and harder to manage everyday. Where it used to take, one man could keep his finger on all of the whole operation, it's got to the point now where it has to be kind of spread around and have a lot of people looking.

I'm going back to the Club Cal-Neva. I think our participation in civic things that are going on has been good as far as charities, United Way and everything. I said everybody should participate. And the amazing thing is that the gambling industry, despite all you hear about it, does more in the way of charity and helping local entities of the different things that need help than any other form of business. We find that in trying to help these various entities and make them go that the people that don't help are the people you think would, the doctors and lawyers, the architects, the engineers. A lot of these individual businessmen don't participate. It seems like the big load is always carried by the gaming and certain other industries that come ahead and do a good job on it. The power company, the telephone company are always in the forefront of this thing; but without the gaming, it would sure change it a lot.

Coming back to Club Cal-Neva and how it was made up at the inception, Leon Nightingale and Jack Douglass started to make the deal with the people that we bought it from; it was a dentist named Dr. Frank and some other people from Los Angeles. Jack Douglass and Leon negotiated with the lawyers and then brought in Howard Farris. At Howard Farris' suggestion, they brought in me. At my suggestion we brought in Ad Tolen as a management team. Doug Busey was a partner to begin with, and Doug was the lawyer for the corporation which by the way is Sierra Development Company.

Howard Farris, Ad Tolen and I worked together at the Palace Club for probably seven or eight years. But Howard Farris and I worked together for over twenty years, and we're very closely acquainted. uh—Ad Tolen is a man from Los Angeles and worked on the border, dealt on the boats, but mainly around Los Angeles, very knowledgeable about the gambling business and a real good partner. uh— He—uh—knows the basis of the business as well as anybody, and keeps a close eye on it, has been very close to the action all the time the club has been open.

Later on we started in to take our sons into the business and wound up with my son Greg [Nelson], Jack Douglass' son, John, and Leon Nightingale's son Steven. They're all working in the club now with various degrees of interest. But I'm sure that this young blood has got to help even if it takes time for them to learn, but they're learning fast.

This has been sort of a weird partnership, certainly not one without problems. I suppose all partnerships have problems. I think the thing that really welds things together is whether you're making money. We've always made money, and it gets better all the time, so this makes for a good partnership. We have many and varied ideas how things are supposed to be run, but I believe that after a lot of argument usually in my end of it—in the gambling end of it—I usually get my way. But it really is hard to show people why I'm doing some of the things I do because I suppose they do look a little bit weird from the outset. However, most of the things that I have done have become pretty successful. I started on the slot machines about two years after we came in and have become very interested in it, and more or less developed the machine that I copied after Keno, called it the "Spot Slot." It had the same percentage approximately as Keno, and the same odds as an eight spot

ticket with a twelve thousand five hundred dollar jackpot for fifty cents which is the same as the eight spot ticket in Keno.

With the help of Phil Waterman, who was then the slot manager and a very good mechanic, we were able to put these machines together, eight-reel machines, the first of its type. We got them together and working, and I had the idea of moving them into Vegas and into various outlets. Went down to Las Vegas and got a license to be an operator of slot machines and put one in the Mint which was being run by my friend Sam Boyd at the time, and also one in the Golden Nugget across the street in Las Vegas. The one in the Mint stayed there I think for six or seven years and on a twenty-five/seventy-five basis, twenty-five percent for the Club Cal-Neva for three years, and then they owned the machine. And I believe that our income out of that was between seventy and eighty thousand. I also put one in the Golden Nugget. It was in there for thirty-one days with twenty-two thousand winner; it got hit for twelve thousand five hundred, and the boss took it out; he couldn't stand the hit. So it shows how it's so hard for people to pay that kind of money out on the slot machines, but that's more and more beginning to be the name of the game.

I also had one in the Eldorado in Henderson and also I put one in the Sahara Tahoe at Lake Tahoe as well as two in Club Cal-Neva, one played two nickels, one that played two dimes, and one that played two quarters and paid jackpots accordingly, five thousand for a dime, twenty-five hundred for a nickel, and twelve thousand five hundred for the two quarters. I would believe that those machines made upwards of a couple hundred thousand, maybe more, in the three or four years they were in there. Later on at the time we bought Club Cal-Neva at Lake Tahoe from Frank Sinatra and once had the machine up

there. At the time we bought the club, in order to get new slot machines we sold the rights to the Keno slot to the Bally Company and Si Redd for a hundred and eighty thousand, and this was enough money to pay for the new slot machines we put up at Lake Tahoe.

Along the same vein in the slot machine business, we became more aggressive and more competitive. In the last three or four years have spent a lot of time revising the percentages on slot machines, [have] come to the conclusion that the lower you make them, the more play you get, consequently the more money you make. The slot machines are a good part of the business now and very, very sensitive. I suppose that at least a third of my time is directed directly to the slot machine department; mostly I'm thinking up new ideas and new things that will go. About three years ago after observation in Las Vegas in one little club down there and Carl's Club in Sparks, but this was originally an idea of mine and Si Redd, and probably this would be a good place to talk about Si Redd.

Si Redd I suppose has been in Reno about eight years, maybe nine. When he came he bought the franchise for Bally slot machines and the franchise for all the "Big Bertha" machines that were then in operation. They were being operated by Dick Graves. Dick was a very bright guy in the business, especially the slot machines, and was the originator of the Sparks Nugget, also the Reno Nugget. Dick was a very innovative man, looking for new gimmicks and new things all the time. It was great to talk to him because he was a very smart man. We became well acquainted and spent a lot of time talkin' about slot machines. He had this franchise and was tryin' to slow down and get out of the business, so he wanted me to buy it. And I brought the proposition before the club and everybody thought well, maybe it'd take too

much time and wouldn't be worth it, although I was really, really for it because I thought it would be a great thing. The board of directors turned it down. Then Dick Graves brought a man from Boston, Massachusetts, Si Redd, in and sold it to him for seventy thousand dollars. The price for me would have been forty thousand. I suppose that, conservatively, Si Redd for himself and Bally slot machines probably made ten or fifteen million with that franchise and with the participation machines that he has out and about in Reno. I don't say that we could have done exactly the same, but I do believe that we would have been almost as successful as Si, had Sierra Development taken the proposition.

However, it was great for us, and my connection with Dick Graves grew. And I went to London twice with him and with the people from Bally slot machine company to go to world-wide trade shows which showed all types of coin operated machines. Held in an old castle in London and just going through there and seeing the new gimmicks that they had out every year, gave me many ideas for new things to do and how to do them in the business back in Reno. It helped immeasurably.

In connection with moving around with Dick Graves, the time I spent with him was always very fruitful mentally, because he'd been all over the world and really showed me a lot of different things. I suppose that he has as good a mind for gimmicks as anybody I've ever seen. We spent a lot of time together picking each other's brains about slot machines, and I don't know who came out ahead, but I'm sure that we both gained a lot from our experiences.

I went to Norway with him about seven or eight years ago I believe in '72 to go polar bear hunting up towards the North Sea, up in the ice flow. It was a great trip, and just spending

two weeks on a boat with Dick Graves was a great experience. It was a great experience, but we were so sick goin' up—seasick that it took the edge off the experience. I also went to London with him twice, the slot machine showings there that they have every year in January, show all the new coin operated machines that come out that year, very interesting experiences. I also spent some time with him in Denmark, and he's been all over the world, traveled all over the world in his own Greyhound bus that was fitted in like a home. And it was so interesting to be with him because no matter where you went he knew something about the area. I think he will go down as one of the old-time greats in gambling.

At the same time the other hunter on the boat was a man named Nicholas Franco. In a short time we found out he was General Franco of Spain's nephew, a very bright man that was chairman of the museum in Madrid, also had the franchise for all the Renault automobiles in Spain and the franchise for all Westinghouse products in Spain. And being Franco's nephew, he was able to move around in politics in Spain very much. He was a very interesting man and very interested in slot machines and thought that maybe Dick and I and he should put them in Spain. This was discussed a lot, and Nicholas came over to Nevada twice to talk to us about it. However, it never jelled, but it was an interesting proposition and an interesting thing to talk about. A year or two later I was in Madrid and met with Nicholas Franco, and he took me and showed me the finest places to eat in Madrid, the small, little, fancy places that ordinary tourists didn't see. Also had a new Renault for me to drive, a driver at my hotel room every morning. In the meantime, from his province in northern Spain right next to the Basque country, he ran for senator of

Spain from this province and made it. It was very interesting that he gave Dick Graves and myself all the credit for his being able to win the election because of the things that he'd learned from us about politics and about how things worked in the United States.

Dick Graves has pretty much bowed out of the picture now and is not a factor in the business anymore, but he did a great deal to develop and make things go. I think his start of the various places [such] as the Nugget in Sparks and everything have great impact on the business.

THE COMSTOCK HOTEL, PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

About a month ago Club Cal-Neva opened a gambling school on Sierra Street in a building I own over there called Sierra Square School of Dealing. We have sixteen “21,” two Craps, two wheels, and mini-Baccarat. We’re gonna teach eventually Poker and Keno. It’s in a nice, big room, an old-fashioned room with chandeliers. Along with the school I would like to start a gambling museum. I’m already gathering some pictures of the old-timers, you know, from years ago, and we’re getting a pretty good collection along with the pictures and all, and we’re going to try to get as much different equipment and so forth that would be interesting to the public. This museum would be open to the public, and in conjunction with the museum any tourist that come in to look at the gambling museum could also learn how to play. Our student dealers over there will be able to deal to these people, and they will be people that don’t know how to shoot Craps, play “21,” play Baccarat or the wheel, and learn by playing. They will play with play money. There’ll be nothing involved in it, but I would suppose

that in time if you won so much, we’d give you a free dinner or something like that to make people sort of interested in it. I think it’s a good idea. It’s never been done before to my knowledge, and so many people come to Reno and don’t understand the gambling, and so they naturally don’t play. All they ever play or get to do is the slot machines because anybody can do that.

In conjunction with this is the museum and the school. I’m getting a bunch of old slot machines in there, the old-timers from 1941 backward into the ’30s when slot machines first started to come out, and also I am contemplating having a Gamblers’ Hall of Fame. I would probably try to make the Hall of Fame include the famous and the infamous, however I don’t know if that would work because you might not be able to say something about the old-timers that weren’t lily white. But I would suppose that you’d have to start with somebody like “Pappy” Smith—the Smith brothers, Bill Harrah, Dick Graves, people of that caliber and then each year induct a few more and maybe we could get the

Chamber of Commerce or somebody to help us along with it and make kind of a show out of it. I think people would be glad to do that. I think that this is something that would help the image of gambling that I'm always talking about, the one that I believe in and I've spent so much time trying to improve.

In the museum I would have dice that were used in the early days that weren't square, that had different numbers on them, that were loaded and shaved and the different things that they did in the old days to cheat the public. If I can get a hold of it I'll put an old electric or juice wheel in and a magnet that had been used on Crap games, and just to show the public what happened in the past and try to show them that the future is nothing like that, and in Nevada now I'm sure there isn't.

And in conjunction with that, if I thought that somebody in Nevada was cheating and they were somebody I knew, I would go to them and say, hey, you'd better cut that out, you're gonna be in trouble. If they didn't pay any attention to me, I would certainly turn them into the Gaming Commission. I feel real strong on this. In the old days it wasn't like that. You didn't talk about anybody else, but again the image of gambling is foremost in my mind, and I would like to keep it that way.

I'd like to talk a little bit now about the—about the image and some of the people in the gambling business that I think have helped the image. There are many, and I'm certain that I'm going to leave a lot out. I would like to get some of the old-timers in that [were] extra fine people and really have contributed a lot to the business. Some great characters, some great people in the business and all with different senses of values. I think that has changed now; I think the times have made it change, and I think that anybody in the gambling business has to have a very rigid set of values that can't vary with different times

and the way things are going. I think that honesty has become a very important part of the business. For the most part I believe that the business is ninety-nine and 99/100 percent pure as far as anybody trying to cheat the people on the outside or for that matter the people on the inside.

The commodity you handle is cash. This is very difficult, and there's so many ways that things can happen that the whole business has changed to the point where money trails and how things happen are the very important part of the business. It has got to the point now where not only do you have to protect yourself, you have to protect the state, and of course the state is in the business whether anybody likes it or not. They're in as much the gambling business as I am, and they are watching their part of it as closely as we are, and I must say are becoming very knowledgeable on how to do it.

One of the foremost in my mind right now is a guy named Jack Duffy. His real name is Jack Cafferty. Jack broke in in Montana probably in the early '30s as a young man and later worked on the boats and on the border and in fact all over the West in different places as it was hard to go to work during the Depression, and people in the gambling business moved from town to town as they opened. Jack wound up in Reno working with me years ago in the Palace Club as a pit boss. I was a pit boss, and he was a dealer. He was such a good dealer, when I first became a pit boss I asked the boss what my duties were, and he said well you just walk up and see everything you can—you're not gonna see much, but look at everything you can.

And he said, "Jack Duffy's dealin' '21' there." He said, "He's got a bottle of beer sittin' on the table; if it gets warm, get him another beer." So that was my introduction to Jack. It was certainly pleasant to bring him

the beer; he was a fantastic man. Incidentally he hasn't drank for years, but he never was a real drinker, but he was just a party guy and got around a lot. He's married to a real neat gal called Lucille, also a dealer in the early days, a very fine person and has a very good reputation.

Jack owned two or three places in Reno, the old Picadilly and the old Town House. About the time—I guess it had to be about '48 or '49, they called him to Vegas and he went to work in the Golden Nugget there, wound up casino manager; and he was a fair, good man and a very good manager. He had some problems. Jack was the kind of a guy that would never turn anybody down, especially the old-timers, and some of the old-timers would work in there when they couldn't work anyplace else. But it was a very successful business, and I'm sure most of it was due to Jack Duffy. Jack has now retired and lives in Oroville. I still hunt and fish with him. We make many trips together, and he is one of the premier people. I think that he dealt "21" as fine as anybody I've ever seen.

Again [there] are so many people of this time. One man that was associated with Duffy at one time by the name of Metrovich, Jimmy Metrovich. Jimmy was a top-notch golfer and a top-notch baseball player when I first met him. He and I were about the same age and broke in about the same time. Jimmy took off in the '30s and went to Spain and fought for the Loyalists back there and came back, never spoke about it much, but became a pit boss and a manager and a real fine man. He died of a heart attack just a few years ago.

Another man in about that same time and a partner with the last two mentioned, Metrovich and Duffy, was Johnny Acuff. Johnny broke in on the boats off Los Angeles, and he first came to Reno in the late '30s and went to work as a wheel dealer. He was a man

with a great personality and a nice guy. He married five or six times, always with good looking girls, one of his downfalls. Johnny Acuff was also a partner with Duffy and Metrovich, and Johnny later moved all over and worked at the Lake for awhile, finally went back to Las Vegas and got to drinkin' quite a bit and died about two or three years ago. But he was a very good wheel dealer and a good pit boss and a very honest guy. He was probably his own worst enemy.

Billy Panelli I've mentioned several times. I think that he was a premier of all people as far as I'm concerned, as far as dealing with the seekers and knowing the gambling business. He wasn't a great personality, spoke very little, in fact spoke hardly at all. He and I worked together in the old Palace Club, and he taught me many, many things. And in turn I think that I taught him some things.

An incident came up with him years ago, between he and I, a man had been playing at Harrah's Club when I was workin' there by the name of Homer White. Homer White was a Faro Bank dealer at the Bank Club, and I could never figure out how he could come in, play everyday, lose a hundred or a hundred and fifty playin' the horses and playin' Faro Bank. This went on for probably a year, year and a half.

One day he come in to me and he said, "Warren, you've been awful good to me, and I'm leavin' town. I want to show you something." And I kind of fluffed him off.

He said, "No, no, I want you to see this." So we took him downstairs, and he said, "You got a deck of cards?" And I said yes. "Let me show you something."

Picked the deck up and picked out all the queens and the kings and put them on top of the deck, put the cards up and cut them and shuffled them three times, and put them back together, put them in a Faro Bank box.

He said, "Now I'm gonna show you the winners of the kings and the queens." And when the first king showed, he then made a bet that all the kings and queens do win, and it did. This was merely a matter of shuffling, and I couldn't quite believe it until he did it two or three times.

Finally, I said, "Homer, can I show this to Bill Panelli?"

He said, "Well, I don't want to show it to anybody else, but Bill's a good guy, so I'll show it to him."

So we brought him down, and Bill saw it and he also couldn't believe it. So I said, "Homer, where do you get this?"

He said, "Well, Warren, years ago when I was a young man and I was a Faro Bank dealer and I ran a game on my own and a guy accused me of cheating, and I shot him and killed him. I spent about twenty years in prison in Texas. I must have wore out a thousand decks of cards shuffling." And he said, "I came up with this deal where an absolutely honest looking shuffle would go through and I could catch three or four winners with eight cards that could be memorized that were exposed in the previous deal in Faro Bank."

It was still hard for me to believe, but he did it four or five times.

He said, "I'm showin' you this because I'm leavin' town, and I'm also showin' you because I got fired for gettin' drunk. I'm gonna leave and I'm an old man; I won't last much longer; I wanted someone to see this. I want you to know that I did this in the Bank Club for twelve years and averaged a hundred fifty or two hundred dollars a day for all that time and nobody ever suspected me. Too bad that I had to get fired for getting drunk."

In my head I was tryin' to figure out how much a hundred to a hundred and fifty dollars a day was. I suppose about forty thousand a year and twelve times four would be four

hundred and eighty thousand, almost a half a million. This was done under the eyes of some of the smartest people in the gambling business. So this goes to show you that no matter how smart you are, there's always somebody who might be a little bit smarter.

Billy and I practiced this deal, for our own edification; and between the two of us, although we weren't as good as the old man, why we both could and proved to ourselves it could be done. I also asked old man White if there was an antidote to this.

He said, "Yes."

He said, "Just don't let 'em split the deck exactly in the middle."

Ever since then, no matter who deals "21" for me, I try to have more cards on one side than the other in order to stop this. However, to my knowledge I'm almost positive nobody in the business ever has done this except this one man. So I guess you'd have to call him one of the famous ones or one of the [ones] that we're talking about or the infamous I suppose. He never did work for me, and I've always thought, "Gee, I'm sure glad he didn't."

One of the people that first taught me the business was Vinnie Merialdo. Vinnie is now eighty years old. He lives in Vegas. He was a pit boss for many, many years, sort of a politician. His brother was the state controller for a long time. They were out of Eureka, a real nice family of Italian and Irish people mixed together, but they were really great people. Vinnie was a playboy all his life, but he was a great family man, loved his family, although he played so much that he probably wasn't the greatest provider in the world to begin with; but I don't think anybody had a more loving father. His granddaughter, I think I mentioned before, now works for me, and I have great expectations of her because she's a very bright girl; and she's helping me run the school.

I mentioned Warren Atcheson before who was the dean of all dealers in the old days, and he was sort of the book of Hoyle of the gamblers in the old days.

I don't know if I mentioned Jack Sullivan or not; I believe I did. His real name was Jack Scarlett. Although I never was real close to Jack Sullivan, he was—we had many arguments with him. He was a very fair man and certainly knew a lot about the business.

John Petricciani, my first boss when I came to Reno, "Slot Machine Johnny" they called him, a very fair, good man. He died quite a few years ago. He was born in '88, so he's been dead about fifteen years I suppose. Although he had never been a dealer or anything like that, he ran a very good gambling house and was well respected. He and Jack Sullivan were always at swords point because they were the only two places in town, right across the alley from each other and there was a lot of competition.

In the early '30s young Harold Smith opened Harolds Club, and I suppose that I contributed quite a bit to his success because we used to stop him from playin' all the time and not give him credit. If we had he'd probably broke himself because he was always a player and still is. I was never real close to Harold, but he was a very flamboyant guy, and we were raised in the alley together. And he and his brother Raymond were all about the same age, started out about the same time.

Another man that I met about that time was Bernie Einstoss. Bernie was a very bright man, I think as good an all around person in the gambling business that I've ever known. He was a bookmaker, was raised on the streets of Los Angeles and was down shootin' Craps and crooked dice when he was in his teens in the alleys of L.A. He came up and died a wealthy man, had a part of Caesar's Palace when he died. He fell dead at the telephone.

He was also about my age and was always very good to me. I worked for him for five years at the Mapes, and he was a pleasure to work with. I learned a lot from him, and I think it works both ways—he learned something from me.

He had a partner named Frank Grannis who worked for me at Harrah's Club. Frank's an old-timer, still alive, probably in his eighties, soft-spoken, sweet, nice man, knew the business very, very well, treated people good, a real fantastic guy.

A man that had quite a bit of influence on me in the gambling business, a man named Harry Weitz. I think I probably spoke of him before. He's the only man in the gambling business that doesn't speak to me which I feel very bad about, but I learned a lot from him and was around him a lot. Some of the things that happened to me wouldn't have happened if it hadn't been for Harry helping me. However, I think that he was repaid many, many times. Harry is a compulsive gambler; he plays all the time, and I'm sure that although he's made a lot of money and all, that he's come to the point now where his gambling has about got him down. He's gettin' to be an old man. It's a shame because he had a lot of talent; he was one of the real sharp people in the business, a very nice guy.

"Pappy" Smith was never one of my favorites, but he had to be one of the great people in the gambling business. I think he was always very honest, and I also think he was very lucky. However, I had some experiences with him that were very strange. One time when I got out of Harrah's Club and before I went into the Waldorf, I had an idea of dealing Faro Bank with a new kind of a layout that I had perfected with Billy Panelli. This Faro Bank layout would have been easy to deal and easy to play. I thought it was a very good idea, still do; however, I could never

really make it work. But it was fixed so the bets were very easy to see whether you win or lost and much different than the regular game. Howard Farris and I got a hold of a bankroll of fifty thousand dollars and went in to see old man Smith to see if he would be interested in putting in a Faro Bank, and I showed it to him. And he was absolutely enthralled. He says that's the greatest thing I've ever seen, I want you to put it in, but he said I don't want to bankroll it because I've had some bad experiences with Faro Bank and if you'd bankroll it and run an honest game, I'd be glad to give you the space and our percentage. I was absolutely sure that the game would have gone in there because it would bring traffic and there wasn't another game in town, and there were still a lot of players at that time. So he said come in and see me Tuesday, so the following Tuesday I went in. I had my certified check for my bankroll and had the table all set up, and I sat down outside of his office about thirty minutes and then forty minutes. Then all of a sudden about an hour and a half.

I walked in and he looked up and he said, "I've changed my mind."

Well needless to say I wasn't working, and I felt real bad about it. I later heard and certainly believe that he consulted his astrologist, and the astrologist said that the moon wasn't right to put in a Faro Bank game and that was the end of the story. I don't know for sure if that's true, but that's what was said.

Somebody else that bears mentioning, an old-timer by the name of Eddie Sahati. Eddie Sahati was a known narcotic addict. He was on morphine and had to have a fix every four or five hours. In those days it wasn't such a crime, but he was a very famous guy as far as gambling, wound up owning the Sahati Club on the south shore of Lake Tahoe. He had a brother Nick who was not a player on the inside, but a gambler, but not like his brother.

Nick would bet every dollar he could get a hold of trying to live up to the image of his brother. Eddie died, although he went back to Kentucky and took the cure; I'm sure that he went back to heroin and died quite a few years ago. There's a whole family of them, the Sahatis. His mother was a player, his sister was a player; they were around gambling all their lives. They were Armenians and Syrians, and there were the Nahas and—the Syufys and the Sahatis, one big intermingled family, all of them not kinky, but very sharp people, not hard to deal with, but you could win their money, but it was never easy. They were very interesting people to be around.

One of the people about that time that I met, still my good friend, one of the old-timers, Sam Boyd. Sam was brought up on Bingo down on the beach in Long Beach and around Los Angeles, went to Hawaii, then came back to the states and learned the rest of the gambling, worked on the boats, and finally went to Vegas and worked down there. When I met him he came up to Reno to open up the club that I'm in now, Club Cal-Neva, for Sanford Adler. I became acquainted with them and the friendship has lasted and we are now partners in the California Hotel in Las Vegas. And it's a real fantastic little joint. It's makin' money, and San's one of the old-timers that I talk about that made the transition and now runs things about the way I do.

Another Las Vegas man, Jackie Gaughin, has no peers as far as I'm concerned in the gambling business. He has a piece of about eight joints, he goes about eighty miles an hour, must wear out a pair of shoes each month, although he don't buy a new pair just as soon as they're wore out. He's also a philanthropist, gives a lot of money away in Las Vegas and very well thought of. I suppose between he and Sam Boyd, the old-timers that really know the business, they're probably a

couple of the premier people that got on top and doing real good. Most of the corporations of the bigger places don't have those kind of people, but there's still a place for them. And I consider myself in that category, people that now own pieces of a joint and are up and making money.

Another one of those, my present partner Ad Tolen started out as a wheel dealer down in Mexico and on the boats in Los Angeles.

I think that the people I first came to Reno with like Jim Brady who is now dead, bright young man; Clyde Bittner, a dear friend, wound up bein' a boss for me and died of an ulcer operation about twelve or fourteen years ago. He and I came to Reno together; we were very close. Dick Trinastich, another boy I suppose I mentioned, but he also was one of the first people I knew, a top-notch Keno man, and he has also passed away.

Talk about some of the young people who are not young any more but broke in and worked for me while they were going to college; this is one of the high points of my life. I talk about that all the time. I think another thing that has pleased me that I've been able to do is my relationship politically. I only started this a few years ago, and I consider most of the politicians I know, good friends. Mike O'Callaghan is one of the fine men I know who has been very good to me, and I think people like him certainly help the image of the gambling business because he's always looked at it objectively and criticized where he thought it was due and praised where praise was due, so I think he's helped it a lot.

Senator Bible got to be a real dear friend. He's helped the business so many ways; every time we went to Washington to fight with the IRS or the Justice Department, he was always right there behind us. The same way with Walter Baring, now dead, also Senator [Howard] Cannon who's been a good friend;

and now at the present time Santini, House of Representatives from Nevada has proven to be a real good man, helps the business, but only because he knows that it's the main part of the state's economy.

All these things are gratifying. I'm very pleased that they've happened. These things that have happened that I've done, especially the last ten years, have given me a lot of satisfaction, although they were a lot of work. I've worked with the Chamber of Commerce, the Rodeo Association, Renovation—downtown association, Gaming Association, and I've tried to be a leader, especially for the gambling business to show what I thought it was and what it should be. I keep talking about what a great thing gambling is, and I really don't condone it. I believe that gambling has got a place; I think it'll always be here. And I think that the state of Nevada runs it very well, and I also think that my part of it I run very well.

CONCLUSIONS

The gaming industry in my opinion is undergoing some great changes in northern Nevada, southern Nevada, also in the rest of the United States. The situation in New Jersey, I've been real close to that since it was first thought of. I think it was about four years ago, Governor O'Callaghan asked me to come to Las Vegas, and we met with Governor Brendan Byrne of New Jersey, four or five people from the legislature of New Jersey, and two or three of his assistants. We met with Pete Echeverria, myself, the governor, Phil Hannifin, and also Don Dugellio from the Review Journal of Las Vegas and Hank Greenspun from the Las Vegas Sun.

The meeting was primarily for us to tell the governor of New Jersey what we thought his problems would be in New Jersey should they elect to go ahead and legalize gambling, which they have done. I think the information we gave them was very good. We told 'em it would be hard to control, would be a lot of people, it wouldn't be easy, but it was possible. I think we indicated at that time that as far as Nevada was concerned, we weren't for it or

against it, that we didn't believe that it would have a great effect on the state of Nevada.

Hank Greenspun came in late and gave quite a dissertation on what he thought, and it was absolutely different than anybody else thought. I was very amazed when he read an editorial that was in the Sun the next day. It started out "Governor Byrne fiddles while New Jersey burns," the fact that he said that gambling, they thought they would put it in Atlantic City. He said instead of New Jersey bein' the Garden Spot of the United States, it would become the pest hole. I didn't agree with that and got in an argument with Mr. Greenspun. But anyway, I think the information that we gave them was good. And naturally the governor was a little hesitant in giving them too much information because he thought it would be like if you were in one business to give your competitor all the information about it.

However, it has gone forward, they are going to open; and I believe instead of being a detriment to Nevada that it'll take them a long time to get where we are. And I think

that all they'll do is teach more people to play and probably in the long run maybe help the business in Nevada.

Speaking of the changes that are taking place in northern Nevada, at this time within the next five or six months they're going to be seven new hotels open, probably adding two thousand rooms to the present number in Reno. I have many, many different thoughts on what this is going to do to the industry, but my own opinion is that it can do nothing but help. We do have problems with putting the people to work, where they're gonna work, we're gonna have a terrific time getting enough help to do the jobs that have to be done, but I believe, as always, it will work out. I see such a bright future for the industry in northern Nevada. It seems to get better all the time, every weekend is better, every month is better than the previous month. Weather doesn't seem to bother us any more. I think that Reno is really on the upswing, and I think possibly a lot of it is due to the gain in industry in the north itself. I think that we do a real good job in treating customers well. I believe we do better than Vegas, although Vegas is getting better. But I do believe that we have an atmosphere that people like. I think it's getting to be more of a carnival all the time, not so much big gambling; the people just come like they're going to a carnival or a circus, just come in and mill around and stay around where most of the action is and just seem to have a good time.

For myself and my associates, we are in the process of going across the alley and doubling the size of our club. This will take about two years. Also we're going up the street two blocks and opening up a new hotel that will open in May called the Comstock which will be in old fashioned decor depicting old Comstock mines and so on and so forth. I think there's been a lot of good ideas in it. I

have not spent as much time developing this as I have in the past, and some of the younger fellas in the organization are going with it and doing a good job. I think it'll be something that myself and my associates will be proud of and I think Reno will be proud of.

Everything seems to be getting bigger and better. We do have problems. One of our problems as I see it now, is the attitude that the Gaming Control Board and, I suppose, the Commission is taking at this time. They seem to be getting more and more into management itself than they ever did before. At the present time I'm in a hassle with them. They're insisting that I put in a camera system of surveillance over my games which in my opinion, what I've seen in the past, isn't the best way to protect yourself. I think that the surveillance that we get in our "peeks," the eye itself—my eye in the place of that of the camera is much better. I don't know if we'll go to court, but I really am upset about it, and I do think that the state is really coming on too strong. I also believe that the state auditing department coming in and saying well you should have cash registers for your Keno, you should audit this way—I'm doing this from almost fifty years of experience, and I'm getting the young people that have never worked in the industry telling me how it should be run. I think that this big brotherhood goes to the IRS, to all bureaucrats that you find you wind up with, and some of the stuff isn't feasible although I do believe they try hard in trying to do the right thing. I think that they think basically that they are right, but I also believe that I'm entitled to my opinion.

Be as it may, this is not going to hurt the business, it's just another irritation that I guess you do get in business. We have the same thing with unions. At the present time Club Cal-Neva doesn't have one union member in any department, and it seems to work

out well for us. When we did have unions it was nothin' but a hassle, and people I don't believe took as good a care of the people that work for me as I do. And I'm sure this is true. I think that the threat of the unions probably makes us come on a little bit faster, but I think we know how our people should be treated and how we handle them. And I think it's working out good. This is true all over the industry in northern Nevada. I'm sorry to say it isn't true in southern Nevada, but with one or two small exceptions, nobody in Reno is unionized, maybe the bartenders or the culinary, certainly not the gambling. Now one or two places do have some maintenance men that are under the operating engineers, but that's certainly not a threat. I believe that the future of the business—it will keep growing, and our biggest problem at this time is the wage structure. The reason our wage structure is difficult is the nature of our business. The gaming business cannot raise its prices like the butcher shop does the meat, can't be a dollar a pound today, and a dollar and a half tomorrow when that price of beef goes up. We cannot change the percentage on a Roulette Wheel that is 5 and 5/19 or a Crap game which is 1 and 42/100 or on a "21" game which is approximately three percent. These games have been that way for almost since their inception. People are used to it, and there's actually no way that you could change that percentage. Our only hope is that people will bet more money, and the volume will take care of the percentage. However, one person dealing can only handle so many people, so it has become a problem.

It's been very difficult to have people that are used to playing the nickel slot machines and wean them and put 'em on the dollar slot machines, but that seems to be the salvation and we have been able to do that. It goes up all the time. We are also having more "21" games

that are two dollar minimum and sometimes five dollar minimum. But the whole thing has gone up to such an extent that it does make a difference, and we can't see the light at the end of the tunnel, but we have to keep working all the time to change the players over. Five years ago many of the players that are now playing dollar slot machines or even a year ago, you could have put a gun to their head, and they wouldn't put a silver dollar in a slot machine. But now they see how loose they are and that has become the big thing in our business.

I feel that I've had a lot to do with the changing and the come-on of dollar slot machines; results have been spectacular. I think that Club Cal-Neva leads them all, everybody in the state probably, in their handling of it and the amount of money that we make and the amount of money that goes through the slot machines, the dollar slot machines. It's absolutely fantastic. The players are getting a good chance for their money because the percentages are so low on the machines; some of them are 98 1/2 percent, only one and one half percent to the house. And from the way things used to be that is very, very minimal. However, if there is enough volume, that takes care of itself and just goes ahead and makes more money because the players seem to be happy because we do have a lot of winners.

Another new thing that I believe is the coming thing, and very few people have done it, is the large-size jackpots. Harolds Club runs away with it having jackpots as high as a quarter of a million dollars on the floor. Now I've got three or four from a hundred and twenty thousand down to ninety thousand. I've got two machines with a jackpot, should you hit it, would pay fifty thousand dollars plus a thousand dollars a month the rest of your life. Naturally the odds hitting this are very, very high. Ninety million,

seven hundred and some thousand to one, to be exact. However, if you play a machine twenty-four hours a day for a full year, a dollar machine a dollar a time, it averages about seven hundred and twenty dollars an hour. At the end of the year that would mean that you would put something like six million, two hundred thousand in it; and so at a year's full play probably that machine wouldn't be hit. However, it can be hit, and it will be hit. And I would say that probably one of these machines would hit every two years. Now this isn't of course the only prize on the machine; it still has all the small prizes, and people could go ahead and win substantially without winning the fifty thousand dollars with a thousand dollars a month the rest of their life. I now have a machine in mind that I believe I'm going to get on—it's going to take some time—but it'll pay two hundred and fifty thousand dollar jackpot and thousand dollars a week the rest of your life. This is awfully hard to convince nine partners to do because there's always the chance it would be hit. However, in my opinion it would finally come out so that it would make a tremendous amount of money, and some day some lucky person would get that prize. It naturally is hard, but again there would be many smaller prizes of fifty thousand, twenty-five thousand [that] the people would get with some regularity.

One of the things that has made the gambling business, in my opinion, and has helped me tremendously is a knowledge of percentages and the possibilities and probabilities.

I want to go back now to a local guy, a man from Los Angeles who is up here now working out the percentages for me. He's undoubtedly the best mathematician in that field, possibilities and probabilities, I've ever seen in my life. He's a man with no education, a hard-rock miner, but this is his

hobby, figuring out percentages on Keno, slot machines, anything that goes up to great percentages. He'll tell you how much you'll spend in a lifetime smokin' cigarettes, how much it affected your health, how much it's shortened your lifetime, and also how much it cost you, and if you'd put the money into a bank account or a savings, compound interest, how much you would have made by not smoking. Naturally he smokes a couple packages a day. However, I do believe that this is the smartest guy I've ever seen in this particular line of business, and I've been able to shuffle him around and have other people in the gambling business use his ability, but very few of them realize how much he really knows and what the potential of the things he can do. He's a sick man, he won't live forever; he's got emphysema, but he has really been a great boon for me, and I'm sure to the business. But not many people know this. His name is Ralph Shupe.

Our target date for the Comstock opening is in May as I said before. I think it's going to be a real good club. It's gonna take a lot of energy and a lot of work to make it go, but all gambling houses take that. I see nothing but good for my business, and I hope that in the past I've been able to contribute somewhat to the stature of the business. I hope that I have been able to improve its image, and I hope that I will continue to improve the image of my business. I believe it's been maligned. I've said this before, I'll say it again: I don't condone it; it's not the greatest thing in the world, but certainly the way I run it, the way the state runs it, the way Nevada runs it, is the very best of probably not too good a thing.

The "Black Book" that came out eight or nine years ago had ten or twelve people in it, probably half of 'em now are dead. They were dead bang Mafia people, gangsters, that nobody wanted their business anyway.

It was just a sort of over-kill to put it in, say, to keep them out. Nobody would want them anyway. I believe that the state could have a black book that would include all the people that have given us so many problems in the past in the gambling business, all the slot machine thieves and people that are trying to steal from the industry all the time and also the people that have been in the industry and have misused it and stolen. I think that a black book of that kind would be very useful, and I understand the state is now in the process of making a new one. Now to what extent it would come out I have no idea. However, anybody that does anything like that in this day and age, has got a problem because people will sue anybody on the drop of a hat, and it seems that so many of these things violate people's rights. It is very difficult to do these kind of things. However, the state is working on it and it might be something—the one in existence now, I haven't seen one for six or seven years. I forgot the name of the people that are in it, but most of them are people that never come to Nevada anyway and certainly never come to Reno, maybe Vegas once in awhile.

[Would you consider maybe dealers that cheat? Could they go in that?]

I don't think you could ever get that on because I think that would be a violation of a person's rights to make a living, and I don't think it would ever happen. I have people working for me that I caught stealing years ago and because I felt that they had some good in them, I was able to bring them in and say what the hell's the matter with you? And explain what was wrong, and these people I would almost swear they've never stolen since, and they've become very trusted and valued employees. So it doesn't always follow that because somebody steals that you should put them down forever. I believe that you can

rehabilitate many of these people if you show them the error of their ways and show them how to make a living without doing that. But you never know what another person is thinking or you'd never know what another man's problems are. Somebody with a sick wife or a sick child that absolutely couldn't see any other way out, I can understand that. But somebody who steals money in conjunction with somebody else and it becomes a conspiracy, of that kind I don't forgive; and I would not condone. I would do anything I could to stop it if two people, one from the outside and one from the inside get in together and conspire, cheat or steal, then I have no compassion for 'em. But if it's some person that does have a bad personal problem, and they're on their own trying to steal money, that you can rehabilitate them. I truly believe in that, and in most cases I would—especially young people—try to rehabilitate them, and it has worked. In fact I have some bosses now that thirty years ago stole money from me and are now some of my top men. I know this doesn't seem possible, but is; and I have the greatest faith in these very few people that this has happened to.

The taxes in the state of Nevada now are five and a half percent of your gross win. This is a tremendous amount of money. However, it is a figure that we can live with. I think that if it went up another half or one and a half percent, that it would become very difficult to make money. But now I think it's probably a fairly fair distribution. I believe that the state's end of our business last year was something like close to a hundred million dollars out of a billion and a half dollars worth of—of action. And this is a fallacy that I see that comes out so often that it looks like the gamblers make all the money which isn't quite true. This five and a half percent that the state takes out, they get theirs before we pay any expenses. I would

say that the average gambling house, well run, if they could keep fifteen percent of all the money they win after payin' all their expenses, they would have a tremendous operation and have a good income.

But however, it must be realized that after that fifteen percent of the dollar won, not the dollar played, the dollar won, uh—then that goes through the hands of Uncle Sam. In my particular case I'm in the seventy percent bracket. This takes considerable amount of the money, so I would say when it comes right down to it that for every dollar that is won over the tables, if an owner or a corporation keeps five cents of it, he would be very, very lucky. I'm certainly not knocking the business. It's still lucrative. It's made me a comparatively wealthy man, not cash dollars, but I've been able to buy property and a home my wife's found very, very good. And I feel that I worked hard for it. In my particular case starting out almost forty-six, forty-seven years ago, it's only been the last fifteen years that I've really gotten a lot of money, but again it's been due to the partners that I have, the hard work we've done. We've slowed down now, but I would say that my present status, the twenty thousand dollars that I invested in Club Cal-Neva is probably about as good a parlay as you'd ever see in the average lifetime. I'm not tryin' to tell what my net worth, I really don't know. But, I keep telling both of my children not to worry about it because I spend my money awfully fast, and I'm not trying to save or put anything by for posterity. I'm tryin' to live a good life, be good to people, try to not give away a lot of money, but I try, to charity. And of course I look at it from the point that it is a write-off, but I think that I give much more than the average person and certainly much more than the average doctor, lawyer, or that class; and not to be a big-shot or a hero, but because there are many, many places and

many things that I think do need help and that the money is well spent. I think that in my personal life with the people I know that are less fortunate, that I not only do I spend my money with them, I also spend my time. I'm not tryin' to make myself a hero, but I do believe that the people that are sick, the funerals I go to, and the people that I try to help, I think that those things probably have helped me as much as anything.

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